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No. 2710

**FIGHTING IN NICARAGUA:
BATTLES ALONG TWO BORDERS**



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NORTHERN FRONT

JOURNALIST TRAVELS WITH FDN CONTRAS ON NORTHERN FRONT

San Jose LA NACION in Spanish 13, 14, 15, 16 May 83

[Series of four articles by LA NACION special correspondent Lafitte Fernandez, who was in the Nicarao fighting front located between Nicaragua and Honduras for a week with photographer Jose A. Venegas]

[13 May 83 pp 12A-13A]

[Text] Mountains of north Nicaragua. I do not know how many times I asked myself whether I would only find beasts trained to kill, as their detractors call them, or simply men who have taken up a rifle to fight against some government rulers whose ideas appear strange to them.

That question had almost become a habit while I was beginning the longest walk of my life to reach the main camp of thousands of men who fight the Sandinists, there where the dark mountains are strewn with corpses every day.

If I accepted that I would only find former Somoza guardsmen who wanted revenge, surely the new guerrillas I would find would be men whose eyes light up easily at the sight of blood.

However, I finally understood that things could not be viewed without flexibility. The real composition of the more than 8,000 men who fight the Sandinists in the north of Nicaragua is completely heterogeneous.

It is true that in the vast jungles of that region a significant percentage of former Somoza guards are waging fierce battles against the Sandinists, whom they accuse of delivering Nicaragua to international communism.

Nevertheless, they are not alone nor do their eyes light up at the sight of blood or with revenge. They believe that the guard which protected Somoza died in July 1979 and they now consider themselves military units without a master and totally renewed.

In this same jungle, which helps the clandestine operations of the former Somoza guardsmen, there is also a much larger number of men, who although they are guerrillas today, had never fired a machinegun nor much less hurled a bomb at anyone.



The insurgents who make up the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN) control a large strip of territory and everytime they expand their holdings they place an organization flag.

These are rebels of 14, 15 or 16 years-of-age, peasant men and women who descend almost naked from the hills demanding a weapon for fighting against a system with which they do not agree, or persons who do not accept that their God be rejected.

Six days involved in a daring game in the Nicarao war front--perhaps the bloodiest in Nicaragua--allowed me to see that those who assert that the Sandinists are only being fought by former Somoza guards who do not have popular support, are lying.

It served, rather, to make me think that Nicaragua once more finds itself involved in a war, whose outcome is still in doubt, a war which will become bloodier every day and cause its inhabitants to post a new list of deaths, sorrow and mourning.

The Road

The thick vegetation appeared to hamper every footstep of the patrol, which consisted of some 20 insurgents who were leading us to the camp and to the Nicarao battlefield itself.

All of them are young soldiers. Some are almost children of ages ranging between 14 and 16 years. Five women also accompanied us and appeared to be veritable Amazons when they ducked to avoid brambles while carrying modern FAL machineguns of Belgian manufacture, considered an excellent assault weapon.

All of them had noms de guerre: Paula, Jeanette, Maria and Mercedes. The tallest of them used the strange pseudonym: "Lombriz" [earthworm]. The woman of some scant 16 years-of-age said: "I do not know why I named myself that, but I like it."

At times it seemed to me that it was physically impossible to take another step. We had already spent two days walking through the jungle, very long 14-hour walks with a few hours rest, and we had not yet reached our destination.

A few kilometers away could be heard the explosions of the mortars used by the Sandinists for fighting against those who oppose them fiercely. The march was at times irritating, silent on orders from X-3, who commanded the patrol because we were traveling through an area they called "a red zone," which revealed a large enemy presence.

There was little we could talk about with the talented commander, who at age 32 is the deputy military leader in the hardest of the war fronts in northern Nicaragua. We had only heard his annoyed remark because of the fact that they are called "Somozistas."

"When we arrive you will be able to see we are not guards. We do have a few of them but we are made up of people from a country which supports us entirely," he told us in a low voice once.

Those were not exactly roads for a luxury automobile, not even for a rural vehicle. There were very long, although narrow, tracks which run through the mountain and only the rebels know where they lead.

There was a halt in the march for a few minutes. "Silence," warned X-3 in a low voice, while the barking of several, furious dogs was heard. I could not manage to understand the true significance of this fear.

"They use dogs to detect us," said the man, while we took advantage of a rest to smoke a cigarette. Little by little the barking of the specially trained dogs was lost in the vegetation and that was of important significance because it meant they had not detected us. However, the explosions of mortars continued to be heard, indicating that bloody fighting was going on nearby.

During the past 36 hours we had not traveled by night. We moved only under the punishment of the sun, although we could rest very little during the night. Almost as if cursed, when we tried to sleep it would begin to rain heavily.

The guerrillas usually travel during the hours of darkness only in zones where the vegetation does not allow them to move undiscovered. They sleep by day in places where they cannot be discovered and when the moon does not provide enough light for night operations, they travel holding on to each others belts.

A School

Almost at midnight of the second day we arrived at a rest point, which was closely guarded by several tens of soldiers. This was not a camp for men who confront the Sandinists but rather an improvised school, where all the people who want to engage in the fight against the present rulers of Nicaragua, are trained.

It is hidden among the heavy foliage of a gully which is crossed only by a small stream from which water is taken for cooking.

More than 100 men were resting there that night and all of them were peasants who arrived at the place almost in rags after walking for many days to join in the struggles of the insurgents.

It was the next morning that we saw clearly their almost mestizo faces heavily tanned by the sun. It was truly saddening to see their clothing, although not so their physical condition. It was a demonstration that they lived in the greatest of poverty and had abandoned their children, their wives, everything they had, to join in a struggle which they believe to be liberation. A new commander, X-7, who we had not met until that day, awakened them around 0430. He assembled them in the dense vegetation and before talking to them he asked them to sing the Nicaraguan National Anthem.

The leader is a man of some 40 years-of-age, who said he had been a Protestant minister, who after seeing the loss of freedom in his country, decided to join the armed struggle a little more than a year ago. He also asserted that he had not been a member of any military unit, although he acknowledges that once he learned the art of war he found he has a knack for teaching it.

He truly has the voice of a Protestant minister. It is serious, has a good tone, and it was from his mouth that I heard the first exhortation to a group of men who were initiated in the tasks of war.

After they finished singing the Anthem, the man said to the peasants gathered in the woods:

"It is the only song that should sing in our blood. We must also respect the flag. It is there depending on us. You are the ambassadors of an occupied country. Take the message of freedom to all free countries and men. Explain to them why you are sacrificing your lives and never feel humiliated in this our land.

"It is better to die than to live on your knees. We are men who must and can defend our rights. You are no smaller than a Russian, a Cuban or a Libyan. It is when a man decides to defend his rights that he shows his courage. Nothing, nothing is more worthy than offering ones life at the altar of the country. Let us trust in God and the good will of men. Without God we can do nothing."

X-7 continued to build a good oratorical piece, which meant the beginning of a long day for all those men who later on would engage in combat training.

[14 May 83 pp 12A-13A]

[Text] Mountains of North Nicaragua. The commanders of some 8,000 Nicaraguan rebels, who are fighting the Sandinists in the northern part of that country, increased the number of war fronts to 10.

However, they believe they could increase them in coming weeks, with which they would also announce an imminent intensification of the fighting.

To all those fronts of the Nicaraguan Democratic Front (FDN)--scattered mainly in the North and on the Atlantic--are added those which were opened recently in the southern part of the country by the fighters commanded by Eden Pastora.

"The Sandinistas are going to go crazy in a very short time," believe the commanders of those rebels, who claim that every day they receive new recruits and that is why they need more weapons for increasing their offensive power.

Despite this, they warn that if they do not receive more weapons, they will intensify the fighting even though it be "with sticks and stones."

The increase in the number of recruits in the ranks of the insurgents forces them to establishing new training schools hidden in the mountains, where the newcomers arrive completely convinced that to win the battle from the Sandinist commanders they must use violence.

Why They are There

"Jose" is one of the first men I met in one of those camp-schools, where one of the first recommendations they make to the recruits is that they not use their real names but that from that time on they use pseudonyms.

In that type of camp were born such noms de guerre as "Atila," "Straight Shot," "Chele," "Chiricuto," "Batman," "Cachete," "Escopeta," "Gorila," Pichirilo," and thousands more.

Jose decided to use a biblical name, because he is very religious. He belonged to the "Children of God" church, an organization which has had problems with the Nicaraguan military in the past 4 years.

He is 54 years-of-age and has always devoted himself to tilling the land in a small farm he owns near Matagalpa. However, he asserts, once the new regime came into power he began to have problems because of his religion.

He says that several Sandinist military members began to visit his house and they warned him that he must not believe in any god because "the only god is man." Since he continued to visit the site of the religious congregation, he was arrested three times on the charges that the religious denomination was opposed to the changes proclaimed by the revolution.

"I was fed up with being arrested. I said goodby to my wife and children and here I am. I am going to fight so that there will be freedom in Nicaragua. How can one believe that one cannot even go to church!"

"Pablo" is another peasant who does not share the ideas of the Sandinist commanders. He is 38 years-of-age and spent a little more than a month in the prison of Managua accused of being "counterrevolutionary."

He said that the only thing he did was to express his dissatisfaction with the Managua regime and for that they imprisoned him. Later he was convinced by some of his friends to join the troops of the FDN to fight those whom he now considers " betrayers of the country." It took him almost 6 days of travelling through the jungle to reach the hidden military training center.

When several dwellers of some towns get together and want to join the armed opposition, they send them guides, who bring them to the training camps after tiring journeys.

It is asserted that if the Sandinists discover those men, who they would view with suspicion, walking through the mountains, they would arrest them or kill them.

Of all those who are in that training camp, it could not be said that a single one of them has a military bearing. There they are taught to fire and care for their weapons and they fit them out with the navy blue uniform worn by the majority of the guerrillas, although others prefer the green.

Food

The food for those men is prepared in an improvised kitchen and it is really poor. Each is given a small aluminum plate with a few ounces of beans, a little rice and one tortilla. "These are war conditions under which the stomach also suffers," explain the commanders.

When they become fully involved in combat, the food may be even poorer and days may go by without a mouthful of food to eat. When there is money, a cow is bought from some small farmer and the food increases significantly.



The 10 different war fronts of the Nicaraguan Democratic Front

Water is no problem for the recruits or fighters because few regions of Nicaragua are watered by so many rivers or streams as the northern region, although at times it cannot but mean the danger of contracting diarrhea or other sicknesses because of the polluted water.

The commanders in charge of the various military training camps operating in the interior of Nicaragua, believe that a large number of men join them every day and that they need some 25,000 weapons for increasing their offensive power. Some of the most important news media of the United States have stated that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) financed the purchase of weapons and supplies for the rebels who are now fighting in northern Nicaragua.

However, one man, who was guiding us through the mountains and who is the regional deputy commander of the Nicaraо Front (whose boundaries are thousands of kilometers in length), says that they do not care where help comes from because his country is waging a real war for recovering its freedom.

When he is told that in the United States the possibility of cutting off those funds to the CIA is being seriously discussed, he is not surprised and says: "Be that as it may, the war will continue even if it has to be with sticks or bows and arrows."

That commander--who is called X-3--is an engineer in agronomy, who says he collaborated with the Sandinists during the struggle they waged against Somoza, although he did not share the ideology of their leaders.

He mentions that he worked during that uprising in tasks of logistic supply and in the repair of weapons. However, he recalls that because he refused to become part of the local government of Nagarote (located some 40 kilometers from Managua), he was imprisoned for a time.

"Once they released me I decided to leave Nicaragua and give my support to everything that fought them. And here I am fighting today," he says.

War Front

When one reaches the Nicaraao war front, it is easily seen how the rebels occupy a corridor of approximately 40 kilometers, which they defend at the cost of any number of lives. To create it they had to dislodge the Sandinists some months ago with bullets and bombs.

The remains of old positions of the government troops and even the trenches they dug are still to be seen. Since that time the Sandinists have not been able to recover that territory despite the fact that they constantly fire inordinate barrages of mortars or other heavier weapon against it.

All the hills which may be an access way to this corridor are closely watched by the insurgent troops, who move rapidly when they see some nearby threat.

In that "hot" zone, never more than 100 men actually gather in small areas at one time, while detachments of fighters move easily in search of greater military objectives.

The guerrillas occupy a town and stay in it for one or two hours and then they flee into the mountains once more. However, they prefer to use ambushes in which several scores of men trap a group of Sandinists and inflict heavy casualties on them, something which is never published by the Nicaraguan dailies.

The insurgent commanders say that "the enemy is suffering twice as many casualties as we are" and that once they locate the rebel fighters they send troops to repel them, about three times as many as the rebels.

"When they arrive in droves, we have more targets. We lay ambushes and they always come out the loser," they say.

It is also said that Russian, Cuban and Bulgarian military personnel advise the Sandinists in antisubversive struggle, although they say that they are not being fought by foreign regular troops in any part of Nicaragua.

The Russians armed the regular troops of the Sandinist army with powerful AKA assault rifles which fire (every three rounds) incendiary bullets which travel like veritable fire balls through the mountains where the guerrillas are hidden.

Recently the insurgents discovered special masks in the pack of one of the Sandinists who was killed in combat and this leads the commanders to fear that in the future they will be repelled with some type of lethal gas, as the Russians are doing against their opponents in Afghanistan.

Some of the highest leaders of the FDN believe that in the past 3 months the Sandinists have suffered 700 casualties, while they declare that their dead do not total 100.

Their adventures

At night, and when the various commanders gather in the mountains with their troops, many tell of their military adventures. The stories of those who say they have fought up to 17 continuous hours against the Sandinists, predominate. Others win the admiration of their comrades when they say they managed to escape after being surrounded by enemy forces of up to 1,000 men.

However, before the narration of all these guerrilla adventures has begun, any stranger to the group can see how almost as soon as it becomes dark each rebel forms a circle with his comrades and they say a rosary. It is easy to hear how the fighters, almost in chorus, repeat with devotion: "Lord, gives us a good life and a good death."

Also, before initiating any military operation, the laying of an ambush for the enemy or the undertaking of long hikes in the mountains, each of the guerrillas kneels and prays for some minutes.

"The majority of us are Catholic. We also have some Protestants. The Nicaraguan people are Christians that is why our struggle also has religious overtones. Each bullet we fire means the path to recover our religion, which the communists wish to exterminate," declares Commander "Escopeta" ("Shotgun"), a young man of some 25 years.

[15 May 83 pp 1C-3C]

[Text] "Lord, give us a good life and a good death," repeated that large group of rebels, who kneeling in the forest, were praying before dawn.

The dangerous objective they would try to reach had been established many hours before by the commanders and none of them, not even the youngest, were nervous or excited.

An assault group consisting of peasants, young people of both sexes and other men with greater military experience, would attempt to take the town of Salamaji located in the northern part of Nicaragua in the department of Nueva Segovia, for some hours.



Site of the fighting.

It was not going to be an isolated action. It would be accompanied by an ambush by another two groups hidden a short distance away in the vegetation.

After more than an hour of fighting, an official report from the rebel headquarters said a day later: "Forty casualties were inflicted on the enemy and two of his vehicles were destroyed."

However, "Soberbio," "Lucero," "21," and Commander "Incapaz" who covered the withdrawal from the town, would never pray again as they did that morning.

All called that day "the zero hour of Salamají."

The Beginning

When we left together with the rebels to participate in the taking of Salamají, we were asked to walk in the middle of the long human line we formed with the guerrillas. There was a space of 2 or 3 meters between each one.

The road was difficult but we wanted to observe a typical action by the guerrillas who fight in the northern part of Nicaragua, although we already knew that for the time being they do not attempt to win ground positions and hold them.

For the time being they are content with dealing blows to their enemies, laying ambushes for them, causing them the largest possible number of casualties and then returning their hiding place in the mountains.

The attack plan had been traced the day before in a small abandoned hut, where the main commanders of the war front usually meet.

Salamaji was located many hours of traveling from there and a day before its occupation the three groups which would participate in the action began to walk through the mountains along different routes at different times.



Watchful, with an eye on their rifle sights, the guerrillas await the presence of the Sandinists.

Everything was perfectly planned. The group with which we were marching would rest a little more than a kilometer from Salamaji, hidden in the vegetation. It was not even possible to talk to avoid being discovered by the Sandinists.

The other two groups would rest in the nearby hills the day before the occupation to avoid a concentration that would give away our position to the government troops. However, all the men would find themselves in Salamaji during the morning of the following day.

The group had no problems reaching the point from which they would go into the town where action would take place the next day. It was a night of silence, the stop was near an important highway, almost on the border, which led to the town of San Fernando.

Many days before, the guerrillas had fought for control of the road because it allows the Sandinistas to send reinforcements when fighting breaks out in the northern part of the department of Nueva Segovia.

Someone told us that during the two previous days some 15 IFA trucks made in East Germany had traveled along that road carrying some 750 Sandinists who were sent to the clashes taking place near the mines of Bonanza. This is the place where "Suicida," one of the fiercest commanders of the Nicaraoo Front, is fighting.

Those facts force the insurgents to fight for control of the highway to prevent movements of government troops through the area.

Zero Hour

The first movements of the guerrillas during that morning meant that we would soon begin the march on Salamaji.

Each of the insurgents inspected his weapons and his heavy pouches, checking the amount of ammunition they should carry. First, however, they formed a circle and prayed for some minutes, then the order to depart was given.

In less than half an hour we were already walking on the main highway, almost challenging the Sandinistas, who while not in the town, were in the barracks located less than 3 kilometers from there.

A short time later, we were walking along the houses of the town under the careful scrutiny of their dwellers, who initially showed excitement although they then decided to talk and donate food to the fighters.

The first order given was to stop vehicular traffic while an FDN flag was raised in a small square of the town.

All drivers and passengers of automobiles were forced to dismount carefully and then the guerrillas explained their ideas and the need for bringing about a change in Nicaragua.

The majority of the occupants of the vehicles which were stopped showed their support for the idea of achieving a new transformation in the country and they even gave the rebels part of the food or merchandise they were carrying.

"Piricuacos"

More than half an hour had passed and the task of convincing the people by the insurgents had become almost monotonous in Salamaji. That situation changed when the occupants of a Nicaraguan Security automobile observed the presence of the rebels and managed to stop before reaching the guards posted there, retreating at high speed in search of the government military forces.

It was at that moment--despite the fact that the automobile was fired upon--that a "red alert" was issued to all the ranks of the guerrillas.

The commanders of the three groups immediately ordered the men to prepare for combat and to occupy strategic positions around the entire town.

Also, intelligently, they ordered some men to take positions on a small hill near the highway, something which was done almost immediately.

It was known that the Sandinistas would arrive at the town using the highway and that for that reason it would be easy to ambush them using an RPG-7 rocket launcher.

Now there was a real agitation in the town and one of the commanders requested that we hide in a nearby hill under the protection of some of his men.

The commotion was easily seen at that time. The townsmen hid in their houses and silence reigned until someone shouted: "Piricuacos, Piricuacos" (a nickname they use for the Sandinistas).

The cry of alarm merged with the sound of several vehicles moving rapidly toward the town. Suddenly there was war! The men of the first line hit the target with their rocket launchers, the Toyota trucks carrying the Sandinista troops, although a short distance behind were the IFA trucks carrying some 120 men, which were not damaged.

Quickly the government forces deployed troops, surrounding the area despite the fact that they had taken casualties when the first vehicles exploded.

All that became an inferno at exactly the moment when we were asked to run and hide in the nearby mountains and to march at least 15 kilometers to the rear. The rattle of machineguns was constant, irritatingly deafening. It was a fight without quarter.

The Sandinists quickly increased the number of their men and at the end of almost an hour of fighting, the order was given to the rebels to withdraw to the mountains, since the objective of inflicting casualties on the enemy had been already accomplished.

Commander "Incapaz," a young man of some 25 years with curly hair, asked all to withdraw and said he would stay behind with three men to cover the withdrawal.

His orders were carried out and after almost 20 minutes more of fighting there was silence. As we fled, we could no longer hear the sound of machineguns, and the march continued without concern.

We had no difficulties in the withdrawal and we marched once more for 5 or 6 hours until we reached a point where the insurgents were to rendezvous.

Little by little small groups of five or six men began to come down from the mountains, men who had fled from Salamaji, the rest checked among each other to receive reports on possible casualties.

Finally, one of the commanders there presented the report: His comrade "Incapaz" and the three men who covered the withdrawal had been killed. That caused a shock among the insurgents, and it was asked whether they had or had not delayed too long before withdrawing also. That was the way the "zero hour of Salamaji" came to an end.

[16 May 83 pp 12A-13A]

[Text] No one, not even the leaders of the 8,000 men who fight the Sandinists in northern Nicaragua, dares to say when their struggles will end or when they will reach their desired victory.

They know they are challenging a gigantic and even frightened military machine built by Sandinist commanders with the help of the Soviet Union, Cuba, Libya, Bulgaria and some other nations of the communist bloc.

They also acknowledge that the Sandinist army has perhaps 10 times more weapons and men than they have, although they trust that the unconventional type of war they wage will allow them to even things.

However, although they do not set a final deadline for their struggles, the main commanders of the rebels do not doubt that this shall be "the most important year for Nicaragua."

The hopes of victory of those guerrillas were raised to the highest level when they heard the first reports on the armed actions undertaken by Eden Pastora in southern Nicaragua.

Each of the insurgents talks about, and considers as his own, the successes achieved by the members of Democratic Revolutionary Action (ARDE), who they describe as fighters "for democracy" similar to themselves.

Although there has been no formal pact among the men of the FDN, who fight in the north, and those of Pastora or Fernando "El Negro" Chamorro, there is no longer any dispute among them.

An enigmatic man, who is known only as Commander "Fierro," at 44 is the chief of staff of the rebels of the north, and he is also the one who is most outspoken when he examines relations with groups such as that of Pastora.

He believes that both sides have common objectives (throw the Marxist commanders out of government) and he says that when "the objectives are in place, coordination occurs, although each maintains its structures."

When he is asked if union can be actually talked about, he replies: "Since there have been common objectives, union has existed."

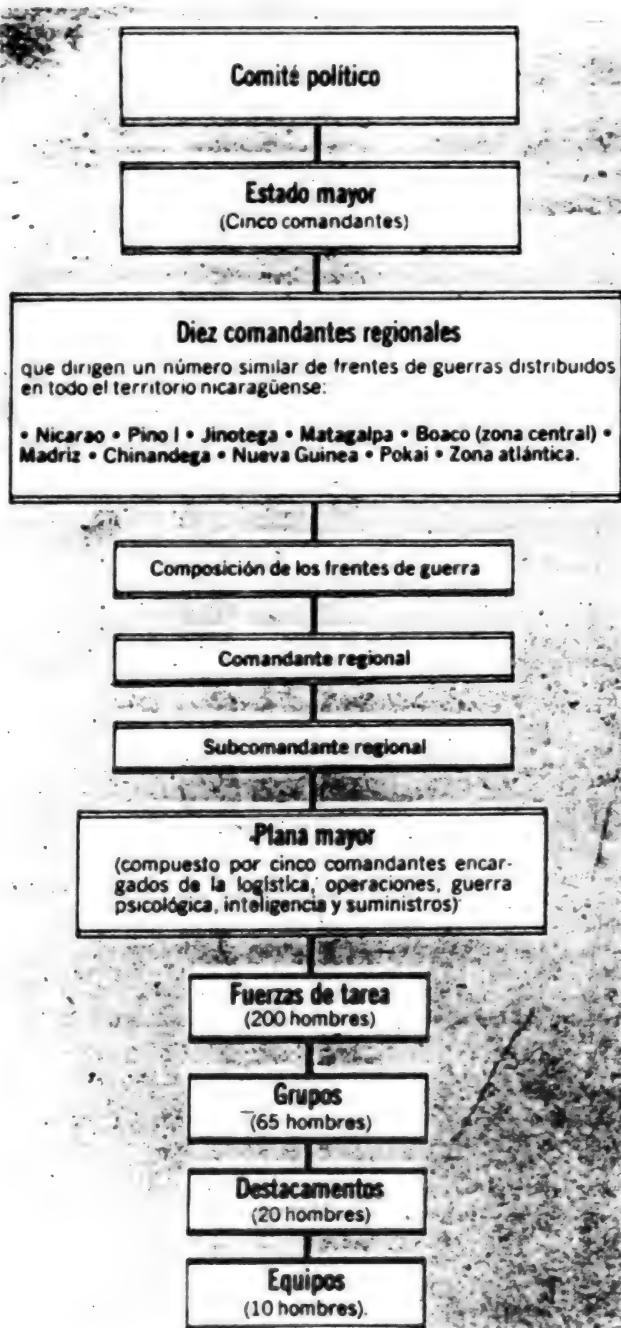
Bonds

The FDN is an organization which rallies the largest number of rebels fighting the Sandinists in Nicaragua.

Its leaders describe it as a nationalist movement of citizens from different socio-economic levels and democratic political ideologies, which was born for "rescuing Nicaragua from its present rulers," whom they describe as servants of international communism.

Also included in their plans is the struggle for creating a system in which the life, liberty and dignity of the human being is respected, as well as freedom of religion and the rights of the family.

They also add to that the need to achieve--among many other things--freedom of thought, speech and information, which will allow the creation of a system of genuine political pluralism in which the army is apolitical and subordinated to civilian authority.



Composition of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN)

Key:

1. Political committee
2. Staff (Five commanders)
3. Ten regional commanders who command a like number of war fronts throughout Nicaraguan territory: Nicarao, Pino I, Jinotega, Matagalpa, Boaco (central zone), Madriz, Chinandega, Nueva Guinea, Pokai, Atlantic zone.
4. Composition of the war fronts.
5. Regional commander
6. Deputy regional commander
7. Staff (consists of five commanders in charge of logistics, operations, psychological warfare, intelligence and supply).
8. Task Force (200 men).
9. Groups (65 men).
10. Detachments (20 men).
11. Teams (10 men).

Its fighters are annoyed and even irritated that they are called "Somozists" because they believe that the dictatorship died in July 1979 and "is politically buried in history and physically buried in the person of the dictator."

Although it is acknowledged that there are former military personnel in its ranks who served the Somozas, it is also estimated that the percentage of them is smaller than the number of peasants, students, workers and many others who are fighting the Sandinists.

It was "Alpha Lima," the chief of a detachment, who was the first former "Somocist" I met in the mountains, where fighting is going on in northern Nicaragua.

He is only 24 and finds himself in a dilemma: Two of his brothers belong to the Sandinist militia and he says only: "God grant we never meet face to face because I do not know what will happen." However, he always tries to explain that his brothers are in the ranks of his enemies because they had no work and it allows them to earn a few cordobas.

When Somoza fell, he went into the Spanish embassy in Managua so that the Sandinists could not imprison him. After spending some time in that embassy, a friend from his neighborhood helped him cross the border and flee into Costa Rica.

He spent some time there until he was invited to fight the Sandinists in northern Nicaragua and he has now been here for several months.

Now he is the leader of a 20-man group and he likes his new task because he considers it to be less tension-producing than having to wait for the guerrillas in a barracks without ever seeing his enemy.

His role as a leader of those men pleases him because, as he explains, he leaves no tracks, they eat unmolested at one or two houses of friends, and they advance more rapidly to reach their objectives among the Sandinists.

He does not like to be called a "Somozist" either. On the contrary, he always speaks disdainfully of the dictator.

"Look, I grew up smelling Somozism. I could not go to school, I had not money or work and I was offered entry into the cadet academy. I spent 4 years there and I concluded my studies when the struggle of the Sandinists was intensifying.

"For me that meant a way of life. Why should I have to live the rest of my life labeled a "Somozist?" I can assure you that no one in the army believed in Somoza. Simply, we were born, we lived and grew up during their governments. Today I am a guerrilla, but not a guerrilla for Somoza. Rather you can call me a guerrilla for freedom, for democracy," says "Alpha Lima."

Military Leader

Commander "Fierro," one of the men most wanted by the Nicaraguan secret police, does not deny to anyone that for many years he was in the military during the successive Somoza governments in Nicaragua.

He graduated from the extinct Military Academy of Nicaragua in 1961 as a military engineer and obtained a degree from staff school.

However, for him the Nicaraguan National Guard ceased to exist in 1979 when the Sandinists overthrew Anastasio Somoza.

He does not live in barracks now. Rather he is a guerrilla, who in the mountains of Nicaragua has become the main strategist of the FDN.

Neither does he deny that his forces contain some rehabilitated former collaborators of Somoza, although he explains that in only a small percentage because "the rest of them are people who are not communists and do not want to be instruments of Cubans, Soviets or Libyans."

With some fear of annoying him I asked him: "Are you really Somozists?" There was no delay in his reply: "Look, in our forces there are members who are former guards. However, they do not represent a high percentage. We have the support of the Nicaraguan people and you can see that we are made up of them. For us the Nicaraguan National Guard ceased to exist in July 1979. We do not represent any organization of the past. We do not represent anything that is not the FDN. We want to give our people what they deserve: A true democracy, a decent government."

It has also been said that the rebels of the north depend on foreign help, although Fierro says that is not true because "We have the means for fighting and the important thing is the human element, of which we have a surplus."

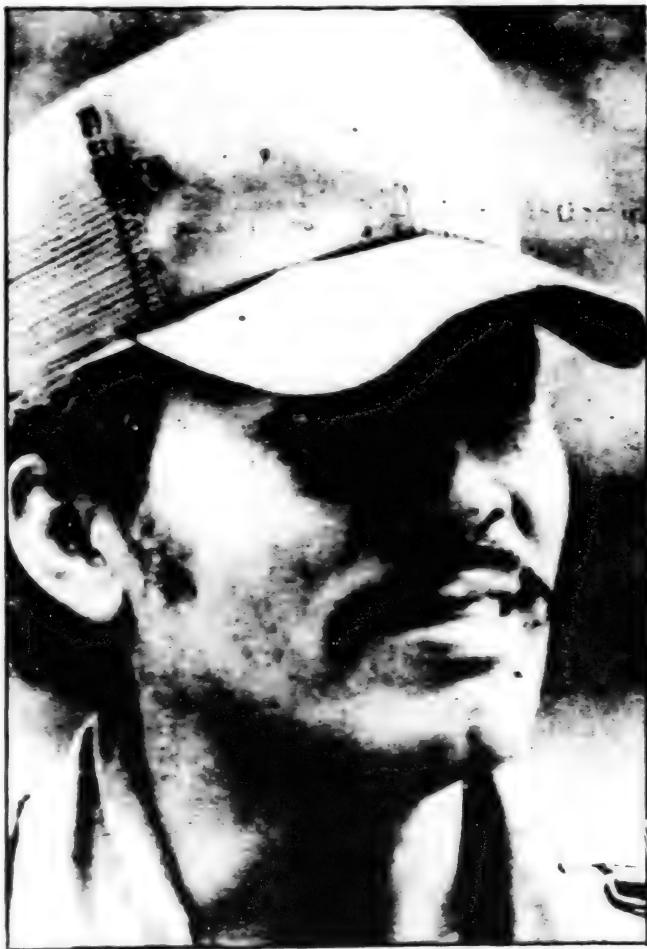
He also says that America should respond to the aspirations of those who fight in Nicaragua "taking off the blindfolds so that they may see clearly what Sandinism is" and so that "those who support them will know that they are being used."

Fierro reiterates that the Sandinists are advised by Cuban and Soviet military personnel, although he believes that if Cuba were to decide to intervene directly in the conflict, it would be committing a madness.

"They would turn Nicaragua into a continental threat and the struggle we are waging is between Nicaraguans for expelling the communists and invaders," he says.

"If you win, how will you guarantee pluralism," I asked him. He replied almost immediately that "there will be a maximum guarantee because we shall guarantee pluralism to all those elements who fought against Somoza in the past and who are imbued with moral, Christian and democratic principles."

The almost enigmatic Commander Fierro believes they are winning the war because "We have not had 100 killed. We have few casualties. We study our struggles very well and we plan everything perfectly."



Commander "Mack": "We are not engaged in lunacies."

Popular Support

All observers of the new Nicaraguan conflict condition the possibilities of victory of anyone opposing the Sandinists to the amount of popular support they receive.

It is not difficult, however, to see how the guerrillas receive any type of help when they visit small towns in northern Nicaragua.

They are given things ranging from water to food, despite the risk those helpers face of being accused of being "counterrevolutionaries."

However, it is still to be established how the dwellers of large cities, such as the Nicaraguan capital itself, will behave toward the struggle expounded by the insurgents.

It is said that such support appears in large proportions although wrapped in the most complete clandestinity because of the repression those who give it may undergo.



One of the deadliest weapons used by the guerrillas is the RPG-7 rocket launcher.

"Mack," the most important commander and leader of the Nicarao war front, (in which 3,000 rebels operate and which consists of thousands of kilometers in the northern part of the country) has his own theory about popular support.

He says that up to now they have achieved unexpected results in their struggles and he believes they are supported by the Nicaraguan people because "if it were not so, we would not have achieved those successes but would have been beaten and chased out."

"Mack," an engineer in agronomy, is 39 years-of-age, a native of Chontales who studied at the University of Bogota. He began his struggles in 1981, after living for some time in the United States.

He is an educated and intelligent man and his skin is the same color as that of any Nicaraguan peasant. Wherever he may be he inspires confidence in his fighters and it is asserted that he is an excellent military strategist. He knows what he is doing.

"I do not want to be anybody in the armed forces of my country. I do not want to be a minister or anything. I only believe the freedom of my people must be sought and that can only be obtained with rifle in hand."

He was dressed in an impressive military camouflage suit. He believes that the fact that they are called "Somozists" is an astute argument by the Sandinists with which they try to destroy their morale.

"Our troops are mainly made up of peasants. That is why the fact that they call us Somozists does not bother me. If things are viewed in that fashion, there would even be Somozists in the Nicaraguan Government. Father Miguel D'Escoto received scholarships and studied with the help of the Somozas. Ramirez Mercado was educated with Somoza money and he wrote for their daily. The label of 'Somozist' means nothing."

It was precisely "Mack" who was the last link in our visit to the forces who fight in northern Nicaragua. He bade us farewell with one statement: "All of my men grew up in the countryside. They are peasants. The struggle is going to continue because the people have already decided that. We are not engaged in lunacies and the Nicaraguans will never be communists even 50 years from now."

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CSO: 3248/909

INTERVIEW WITH FDN MILITARY CHIEF 'COMMANDER FIERRO'

San Jose LA NACION INTERNACIONAL in Spanish 12-18 May 83 p 17

[Text] That enigmatic man is known as "Commander Fierro." Although it is only a nom de guerre with which he travels in clandestinity, those who know him recall how strict he is in his demands in the activities of his subordinates.

At age 44 he knows he is one of the men most sought by the Nicaraguan secret police because he is the chief of staff of an irregular army made up of thousands of men who fight the Sandinists on 10 different war fronts.

When asked to describe himself, he says only that he is a career military man, although he does not deny to anyone that for many years he exercised his profession in the successive Somoza governments in Nicaragua.

He graduated from the now extinct Military Academy of Nicaragua in 1961 and as a military engineer he even obtained a degree from staff school.

However, as far as "Fierro" is concerned, the Nicaraguan National Guard ceased to exist in July 1979 when the Sandinists overthrew Anastasio Somoza.

He does not live in a barracks now. Rather he is a guerrilla, who in the mountains of Nicaragua has become the main strategist of the FDN, one of the main armed organizations opposing the Sandinists.

Neither does he deny that his forces contain some rehabilitated former collaborators of Somoza, although he explains that in only a small percentage because "the rest of them are people who are not communists and do not want to be instruments of the Cubans, Soviets or Libyans."

"Fierro" knows that now the enemy is very different than in past struggles. It is the same enemy being fought by Eden Pastora in southern Nicaragua.

Quickly and logically he says: "Since there are common objectives, union exists."

That almost inscrutable commander does not dare, however, to set a final deadline for the struggle of the insurgents. Fifty minutes of conversation was enough for us to understand his sentence: "This year will be the most important for Nicaragua."

[Question] Are you really Somozists as it is said?

[Answer] Look, there are members who are former guardsmen in our forces. However, they do not represent a high percentage. We have the support of the Nicaraguan people and you can see that we are made up of them, by the people. For us the Nicaraguan National Guard ceased to exist in July 1979. We do not represent any organization of the past; we do not represent anything that is not the FDN. We are Nicaraguans and we shall never cease to be Nicaraguans. We do want to give our people what they deserve: A true democracy, a decent government..

[Question] Do you depend on outside help?

[Answer] No. We have the means with which to fight. We take them from wherever we can. Here what is important, vital, is the human element and we have a surplus of that. Every day hundreds and hundreds of Nicaraguans want to join our forces.

[Question] What do you expect from the Pastora forces?

[Answer] That they fight. Both groups have common objectives: throw out the foreigners, the communists, from power. I am sure that the Sandinists are going to go crazy now that they have to face forces throughout the country. They will not be able to hold out.

[Question] Have you had contacts with the Pastora forces?

[Answer] There have been contacts at the highest level. Remember that Robelo met a few days ago with Calero in Washington. We have points of coincidence with them because we have common objectives.

[Question] Do you coordinate your tasks?

[Answer] When objectives are established, coordination results, although each group maintains its structures.

[Question] Can one speak of union?

[Answer] Since there are common objectives, union exists.

[Question] How do you think America should respond to your aspirations?

[Answer] We have always believed that the American countries should remove their blindfolds so that they may truly see what Sandinism is. Those who support them should know that they are being used to achieve the subversion of order in Central America by the Sandinists.

[Question] What position should other organizations such as the Socialist International, which has repeatedly given its support to the original plan proposed by the Sandinists, adopt?

[Answer] They are the victims of a large-scale campaign by the Sandinists and they have not been able to find the truth. They should not continue to help the Sandinists to oppress the Nicaraguan people. They should demand that there be compliance with the plan and all the points of the decision of the OAS General Assembly in which a framework for the pretensions of the Sandinists was established. America must also demand it because each country was a guarantor of that decision.

[Question] Have you received positive responses from some countries for the movement you make up?

[Answer] Undoubtedly, yes.

[Question] Which ones?

[Answer] It is best not to mention them.

[Question] How do you view the positions adopted by countries such as Mexico and Venezuela toward the Nicaraguan problem?

[Answer] They attempt to resolve internal problems of Nicaragua from an untrue premise. They conceal the fact that the principal problem is the absence of freedom and basic rights.

[Question] What about the Contadora Group?

[Answer] It wants talks between Honduras and Nicaragua. But what does Honduras have to do with our struggle? Nothing. Mexico has always protected the communist processes of Cuba and Nicaragua. However, the truth is that if the Sandinist revolution had satisfied the aspirations of the people we would not have to be engaged in this war. It would be an example for America and the world. However, it did not do so and that is why Mexico should now give a frank and sincere answer.

[Question] Are the Sandinists advised by Cubans, Soviets and other foreigners in the struggle they wage against you?

[Answer] We have charged that repeatedly.

[Question] What effect has that advice had?

[Answer] It has been truly ineffective. The Sandinists have been the victims of the pushing of their advisers and have always lost against us.

[Question] What would happen if Cuba decides to intervene directly in that conflict?

[Answer] It would be madness. They would turn Nicaragua into a continental threat. This struggle is that of Nicaraguans seeking to expel our communists and the invaders.

[Question] It is also said that you have foreign advisers and even mercenaries in your ranks?

[Answer] That is false. We have not accepted foreign forces in order to make sure that we are not identified with the past.

[Question] If you win how will you guarantee pluralism?

[Answer] There will be a maximum guarantee. We shall guarantee pluralism to all those elements who fought in the past against Somoza and who are imbued with moral, Christian and democratic principles.

[Question] When would you be able to attain that victory?

[Answer] It is difficult to determine the date. However, I do assure you that this year will be decisive. They will deteriorate rapidly.

[Question] Do you discard the idea of a coup within the Sandinist forces in the midst of all this conflict?

[Answer] A palace coup cannot be discarded. It could be a way for them to find domestic solutions which would allow them to perpetuate themselves in power.

[Question] Do you believe there could also be an important defection in the ranks of the enemy?

[Answer] There has to be a change within the Sandinist forces because not all of them are Marxists. The problem is that for the time being some of them have not been able to get away.

[Question] Are you winning the war?

[Answer] We have not had 100 deaths. We have few casualties. Our struggle is very well organized, planning is very well done. We have inflicted many casualties on them. We are winning the war.

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YOUNG CONTRA EXPLAINS WHY HE JOINED STRUGGLE

San Jose LA NACION INTERNACIONAL in Spanish 12-18 May 83 p 14

[Text] "Yes, yes, I am Jose, correspondent. I am also the one whose dad was killed by the Sandinists only a week ago while we were fighting them at a mountain near here. I saw him fall dead, clutching at my legs, with a bullet wound in his forehead. It was very hard, but here I am.

"The truth is that my real name is not Jose. That is only my alias, my nom de guerre. It was my father who gave it to me 6 months ago when he, my brother Pablo Absalom and I decided to fight against the Piricuacos [name given the Sandinists by the guerrillas]. The night we arrived at the camp ready to fight, my dad called me and my 19-year-old brother and laughingly gave us new names.

"Do you, correspondent, want to know why I am here fighting in the mountains although I am only 15? Do you really want to know?

"I had never fought and would have rather remained in school but they, the Sandinists forced us to do so. I will tell you why.

"My family is very poor, living on beans and bananas. There are nine of us children and we all lived in San Juan de Rio Coco with my dad Tomas, who was 60, and my mother Cristina. We tilled the soil. Well, not so much soil, just a little corn, beans and coffee.

"We were engaged in that when a little more than 6 months ago the Sandinists came looking for my dad because of some accusation. A bad man who lived near us told the Sandinists that we were counterrevolutionaries.

"I am not lying to you. We were a family who lived in peace. The problems arose because one day some men armed as I am came to our house. They were starving. My mother prepared some food for them and for a while we spoke with them about our poverty, about many things about Nicaragua which are bad. Then they left and we never saw them again.

"After the accusation was made, the Sandinists arrived at my house and threatened all of us with their weapons. They beat my dad in front of us and called him "a counterrevolutionary dog." They took him prisoner. How it hurt us to see him so ill treated!

"After a while he returned, very, very thin, and we tried to go on as before. However, the piricuacos returned one day when we were cutting coffee. There were about 15 of them and when my father saw them he fled toward the mountain. He did not want to go to prison again. Since they could not find my dad, they threatened to take my mother to jail, although they did nothing to her.

"Days later my dad returned furtively to the house. He told us that he could not continue living like that and that he would go to fight against the Sandinists in the mountains together with other men of the town who also wanted to do it. My mother began crying a lot and it was then that Pablo Absalom and I told him: 'We want to go with you. We do not want to leave you alone.'

"My dad accepted and together with other men of the town we walked almost 6 days to the mountains to join these people. I have never walked so much, and almost without eating we arrived at the camp.

"Little by little we learned to use these weapons. At the beginning it was hard but these things no longer frighten me although I have fired few shots at the enemy.

"The last time I did it was a week ago. We were moving as a detachment when we were ambushed by the Sandinists. They had us surrounded, and while we numbered 20, they had to number around 100 at least. We took positions and I became very nervous. My dad took me by the hand and told me: 'God will get us out of this.' My legs trembled and all of us hit the ground when the shooting began suddenly. There were too many of them for us but we defended ourselves with everything we had while the commander looked for a way out to escape from the ambush. I was near my dad. We were firing with everything we had while we moved backward to escape the trap. You should have seen how brave my dad was. They shouted at us: 'guardsmen dogs, surrender.' My dad almost wanted to stand up and he shouted at them: "piricuacos, traitors. Long live Nicaragua, but free of Libyans, Cubans or Russians.'

"About an hour went by and the fighting did not cease. They could not take us and we only defended ourselves. Momentarily my father became careless and they hit him in the head. I only heard him say: 'Son, they hit me.' I turned to look at him and he fell at my side clutching at my legs.

"At that moment I felt that my heart was going to break. I shouted at my other comrades that my dad had been hit. The commander ran to see us and he turned my dad over. He turned to me and said only: "Be brave, Jose, he is dead."

"I began to cry. I cleaned away some of the blood and took the FAL he was carrying. I began to shoot with more fury than ever at them. I also took his dagger, but I could only stay a little while with my dad. We saw an opening and by sheer firepower we opened our way through the ambush until we escaped. Only my dad was killed in that ambush.

"Do you know what saddens me now? That I was not even able to bury my dad, that he had to stay there at Guapino stretched out on the ground. But one thing is sure, this is his machinegun and this is his dagger and I swear to you that although I have not killed anyone, they are going to pay for his death.

"Fortunately, my brother was not in that ambush. He is in Kuje, over there around Palacaguina in the department of Madriz. He does not know my father died. Neither does my mother Cristina know he has died. I am afraid to let her know. I do not want her to be sad but sooner or later I will have to tell her the truth. I know she will cry a lot. What do you think I should do? Shall I tell her quickly or shall I wait for my brother and both of us go tell her? When I begin thinking about that I begin to cry. I hide from my comrades and cry a lot. But it is beginning to pass. Another thing I swear to you: I am going to go like this, with this machinegun, and I will bury my dad even if I have to shoot 500 Sandinists. He deserves to be buried and that I should at least say an Our Father over him. It is, I, correspondent, I am Jose."

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CSO: 3248/910

LOCAL, FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AMBUSHED NEAR JALAPA

Journalists Recount Incident

Managua LA PRENSA in Spanish 24 May 83 pp 1,8

[Text] Although the situation was normal in Jalapa, firing could be heard at the other side of the city, and while fighting was going on in 6 other places, the convoy of 24 newsmen was ambushed by military counterrevolutionary units at 1430 Sunday.

The attack on the newsmen took place when they were returning to the airport of the La Mia ranch where they were to take an airplane for Managua.

The convoy of newsmen consisted of some seven vehicles closely guarded by some 20 soldiers of the Ministry of Interior special forces "Pablo Ubeda."

The attack on the newsmen took place exactly 7 kilometers from Jalapa, precisely at a place known as Inteli, 3 kilometers from the Honduran-Nicaraguan border.

According to estimates, some 100 counterrevolutionaries attacked the group of newsmen with rifle and mortar fire.

Among the newsmen in the convoy were Ricardo Trejos Maldonado of EL NUEVO DIARIO; Sergio de Castro of BARRICADA; Manuel Espinoza, director of information and press of government house; Alfredo Ruscio of the NEW NICARAGUA AGENCY (ANN); Xiomara Chamorro of AIP; Lucy Valenti and Sandra Perez of Government House; TIME correspondents with the names of Duncan, Talbott and Henry Miller, Swedes Sony Ostberz, Dayens Vyleter Bengt Albons and Karen de Young of THE WASHINGTON POST.

The remaining newsmen in the convoy were: Carmen Sarmiento, Luis Berroquero, Juan Velasquez, and Jose Fernandez of Spanish television.

Among the casualties of the fighting are two dead from the "Pablo Ubeda" special forces, and six wounded, among them Capt Roberto Sanchez, chief of information and press of the Ministry of Defense.

Four international correspondents are still in Jalapa because there was no room for them in the vehicles which carried the 20 newsmen yesterday.

Those wounded in the fighting were also transported with the newsmen.

Two of the 24 newsmen who made the trip Sunday, told of their experiences in Government House before a large audience of reporters.

The Experiences of Manuel Espinoza

"After the visit the Junta of the Government made to Jalapa in the department of Nueva Segovia, at approximately 1430 and after receiving a news release from the commander of the troops of the region, Captain Gonzalez, we started for the airport of the ranch La Mia, a very few kilometers from the border with Honduras.

"The group consisted of more or less seven vehicles, all civilian, and we were accompanied by a group of members of the 'Pablo Ubeda' troops of the Ministry of Interior and other soldiers of the EPS [Sandinist People's Army] for the protection of the convoy.

"Five minutes after leaving, our attention was attracted by the fact that there was no traffic, and after traveling a few kilometers we began to hear firing. We discovered it was an ambush when the comrades of the 'Pablo Ubeda' troops and the soldiers of the EPS threw themselves to the ground and began to reply to the aggression. The fight lasted for an hour or an hour and a half, that is, an hour of fighting in its most intense part and then a half hour of a rain of mortar fire.

"When the fighting ended and it was confirmed that there were no attackers around, we stood up and began to examine the area, finding out that two members of the 'Pablo Ubeda' troops had been killed defending the convoy and that six members of the EPS, among them Capt Roberto Sanchez, spokesmen for the EPS, had been wounded.

"A half hour later we found out that some 200 meters away there were the corpses of four Somozist counterrevolutionaries. The result of the fighting was two killed from the 'Pablo Ubeda' troops and six wounded, and four counterrevolutionaries were killed when their fire was answered. As a final part of this result: None of the newsmen were injured."

"Subsequently, after that hour and a half that we were there stretched out at the edge of the highway, reinforcements arrived and they began pursuit of the Somozists, killing 7 more of them."

What Correspondent Sarmiento Had to Say

"It was a profoundly disagreeable surprise, as you can imagine. We were precisely in the last vehicle--I believe there were six or seven of them. I do not know the exact number.

"Suddenly, at a given moment, the sound of mortars and rifles was heard and the car in which we were riding stopped.

"Then the comrade who was driving, grabbed a pistol and told me: 'Lady, defend yourself.' It was the first time in my life that I had held a pistol. I did not even know how it worked despite the fact that I have been in other war fronts such as in Lebanon and El Salvador. As a working weapon I have used a ballpoint pen.

"Well, I found myself with a pistol in my hand and from what I had seen in films pistols have a safety. I said to him, where is the safety? and he said to me: 'Shoot, shoot, it has no safety,' and I threw myself on the ground.

"It seems that the operation consisted of a pincer movement, that is, the contras were on both sides of the highway hidden in the bushes and also in the hills were those who were firing the mortars.

"I do not know for what reason they began to shoot long before the convoy passed and there was a part of the convoy what remained outside the zone of fire, specifically the last two cars.

"I saw many contras run, but I thought they were comrades. The confusion was such that I did not know who was who. The contras were hidden in the tobacco drying sheds. We saw people passing by but we did not know to which group they belonged.

"We were all at our posts taking pictures. I personally saw the assistant driver of the vehicle with his mouth mangled. He was left there mangled and the doctors, women who were in another car, took care of him immediately.

"Then Captain Sanchez arrived—he was wounded by shrapnel in the shoulder. I noted that Captain Sanchez was in another car and when I saw him he immediately dismounted and threw himself in the ditch.

" 'What is happening?' I asked. Captain Sanchez sat down in the ditch and said: 'It is an ambush, we are surrounded!' 'Surrounded, where?' 'Surrounded everywhere.' 'What are we going to do?' 'We cannot do anything.' 'We can do nothing but wait.'

"The first feelings are irrational. The first sensation I had was that my mouth was dry and there was a bitter taste. If that can be called fear, I was afraid. Then I thought: 'These bastards are going to kill us.'

"Finally, I began to think: 'There are three possibilities here. One, that the rearguard troops will come and protect us, second, that they will kill us; naturally I was saddened at having to die so young; and last, that we would be annihilated as they really intended."

After the ambush of the convoy of correspondents ended last Sunday near the ranch La Mia, units of the Ministry of Interior and the EPS took the 24 newsmen to a safe place.

After establishing that the number of casualties was 2 dead and 6 wounded, it was confirmed that two vehicles of the convoy were damaged.

Monday, the correspondents were taken to Managua under redoubled security measures.

After a tiring trip of several hours and the tension of the fighting, part of the correspondents went to Government House where with weariness still stamped on their faces, they spoke to the colleagues who were there.

Other correspondents who made the same trip, such as those of THE WASHINGTON POST and the magazine TIME did not attend.

Carmen Sarmiento, the Spanish correspondent, asked the government that her four companions, who are still in Jalapa, be brought from there as soon as possible.

In turn, Manuel Espinoza Henriquez, chief of information of Government House, said that the four correspondents had not been able to be brought along because there was not enough room in the vehicles but that they would be brought as soon as possible, but also taking into consideration that the highway to Jalapa is now cut because it does not provide safe travel.

BARRICADA Reporter's Story

Managua BARRICADA in Spanish 24 May 83 pp 1,5

[Article by BARRICADA Correspondent Sergio de Castro: "Testimony on a Thwarted Crime"]

[Text] It was 10 minutes to 1600 when I remembered the recorder. It had been an hour since we had stretched out near the jeep in which we had been traveling from Jalapa to the airport of the La Mia Ranch, where an airplane was waiting to take us to Managua.

Sunday afternoon, 7 kilometers from Jalapa, between Esteli and the La Mia Ranch, the contras lay in ambush. The fire from M-60 machineguns and 60mm mortars interrupted the movement of the eight-vehicle convoy, which carried the correspondents who had covered the visit of the Junta of Government to Jalapa.

In it were three reporters from the North American magazine TIME, a special correspondent from THE WASHINGTON POST, a Spanish television team, two Swedish reporters, a Bulgarian reporter and a French photographer. In addition, there were the following newsmen from the national media: Ricardo Trejos of EL NUEVO DIARIO, Bernardo Hernandez of LA VOZ DE NICARAGUA; Alfredo Ruscio of the NUEVA NICARAGUA AGENCY and I from BARRICADA.

Also with us were Manuel Espinoza, chief of information of Government House, and reporters Lucy Valenti and Sandra Perez, as well as cameramen and photographers of Government House.

In the convoy was Capt Roberto Sanchez, chief of public and international relations of the EPS, who was subsequently wounded by mortar shrapnel and who by a strange coincidence had a birthday that day.

Xiomara Chamorro, a Nicaraguan correspondent of the press agency APIA, accompanied the group.

The first attempt to leave Jalapa for the La Mia ranch had been thwarted when we were denied passage at the outskirts of the city.

There was danger said the soldier who was checking vehicles.

In our second attempt, accompanied by about two dozen soldiers of the Ministry of Interior, we managed to pass. The soldiers were in the first three vehicles.

In the fourth vehicle were the correspondents of Government House, EL NUEVO DIARIO, LA VOZ DE NICARAGUA and BARRICADA, with the driver, who was also from Government House.

We were all aware of the danger. This was a flat zone where the probabilities of an ambush were minor but in which we knew that the contras had been active for 24 hours. During the activities carried out by the Junta of Government in Jalapa, we were able to hear the sound of mortars from afar. We also knew that the contras had entered from Honduras and sought to take the city of Jalapa.

The First Shots

On a straight stretch of road, to the left of which were some two blocks of plowed land and some tobacco sheds to the right, we heard the first shots.

We had only an AK and three pistols in the vehicle. We got out as fast as we could and everyone lay flat. The fighting was taking place 150 meters ahead, while snipers fired toward where we were, hitting a vehicle which was less than 10 meters from ours.

A Mortar Round 10 Meters Away

There where we were stretched out, time passed without us even noting it. The initial intensity of the fighting was then alternated with periods of relative calm and by the rounds from the 60mm mortars they fired at us from nearby hills.

Bullets announced their passage over our heads and we heard the whistle of the mortars which preceded the explosion of the shells fired by the counter-revolutionaries. A mortar round exploded some 10 meters from our position.

Because of our location it was impossible to have a clear idea of what was going on at the front and rear of the convoy.

The vehicle which was following us, and in which the North American correspondents were traveling, suddenly began a rapid withdrawal in the midst of a heavy Somozist fire and the covering fire of the people's soldiers. The maneuver was then repeated by the driver of a pickup which was some 200 meters from where we were. The same was done by the driver of the vehicle in which Capt Roberto Sanchez was traveling. The driver of the latter vehicle managed to leave the ambush zone to go for reinforcements, something we learned after the battle.

We knew that several comrades had tried to leave the ambush zone but we did not have the slightest idea if they had been successful. We did have the hope that they had managed it.

Remembering the Heroes

Time was our main enemy because of the numerical superiority and greater firepower of the counterrevolutionaries. The anxiety of some comrades merged with the calm of the majority. There was no lack of someone to recall the examples of the heroes who fell in the revolution and that of heroic fighters such as Brenda Rocha, who have faced the aggressors with courage. It was the voice of Comrade Bernardo Hernandez of LA VOZ DE NICARAGUA, which was heard. Some 40 minutes after the ambush began, the shooting became sporadic and the mortars were silent. At our rear, near one of the vehicles which accompanied the caravan, movements of persons impossible to identify were noted.

The Longest Minutes

Tension increased again because of the possibility that they were contras. When they begin to move toward us, the comrades who had shoulder weapons took up positions. There was care not to fire unless they were sure they were not the men who accompanied the convoy.

These were the longest minutes of the hour we spent there. Finally we noted that they were comrades who were advancing as the contras withdrew.

At that moment I remembered the recorder and I recorded some information on the ambush just in case the fighting would start up again.

Those Who Died Protecting the Newsmen

In the midst of existing tension there was the concern over removing the wounded. We learned at that time that two soldiers had fallen heroically protecting the newsmen who were in the convoy.

The feeling of gratitude was then expressed by the foreign correspondents who noted that they were alive thanks to the devotion of that small group of comrades, who because they were in the first vehicles, were the main target of the contra fire. Those same comrades were the ones who gave a resounding response to the ambush, forcing the contras to retreat.

Among the wounded was Capt Roberto Sanchez, who was hit in the left shoulder by a shell splinter. He had been selected to remain with the group of foreign correspondents, providing them protection and calming them.

The danger had passed, the wounded had been evacuated and pursuit of the counter-revolutionaries by the reinforcement forces which had arrived, had begun.

That night in Jalapa, each of us who had been in the ambush thought about it while we listened to the fighting in the distance.

Foreign Correspondents Speak

Richard L. Duncan, chief of the TIME magazine correspondents, said that the war was more intense than what he had read about it, although he acknowledged that he found a situation of normalcy in Jalapa despite counterrevolutionary harassment.

Bengt Albons, a Swedish correspondent of the DAGENS NYHTER Agency, in statements to BARRICADA emphasized the heroism of the soldiers who defended the correspondents and expressed his sorrow at the death of two of them.

Albons, who was in a counterrevolutionary camp in Honduras some months ago, that North American help to the aggression against Nicaragua, of which he also has been a victim, was very obvious.

Spanish correspondent Carmen Sarmiento declared that it is a "dirty war" against Nicaragua and did not hide her indignation.

The group from Spanish television, of which she is part, had requested permission to cover a battle and because of an error by the driver of the vehicle carrying them, had joined the convoy. The error turned out "well" for them because the cameramen filmed the ambush.

Sarmiento denounced the attack against civilians by the contras of which she had been one of the victims on Sunday. Like Albons she pointed out the courage of the fighters who protected the correspondents and she mourned the death of two of them.

8908

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SITUATION IN JALAPA, SURROUNDING AREA DESCRIBED

Managua EL NUEVO DIARIO in Spanish 22 May 83 p 8

[Article by William Roiz: "Faced with Invasion, the People Continue to Work"]

[Text] How beautiful was the countryside of Segovia the first time I saw it. I had always been curious to know those rich lands and mountains and those ravines covered with pines and brush where General Sandino waged a thousand battles against the Yankee invaders and those who allied themselves to them.

This is not a tourist trip today. It is more for personal than journalistic reasons, although of course one cannot be separated from the other. The majority of the people I have seen have white skin, blond hair and blue eyes. They are the descendants of former European farmers who came to our country many years ago. They devote themselves to agriculture. They plant basic grains, tobacco, coffee and they also raise cattle. Today, as in the times of General Sandino, the Yankee, allied to the former Somozist guards (paid mercenaries and professional soldiers trained in the United States and Honduras) do not let them work now either.

The blood of the peasants, small farmers, civilian transportation workers, farm workers of small cooperatives and Sandinist revolutionaries continues to be spilled in the mountains of Nueva Segovia, for the dollars the Reagan Administration pays to the former Somozist national guardsmen so that they will kidnap and murder our people with the intention of instilling fear and destabilizing our revolution.

The small and medium producers of Nueva Segovia want to work, that is why they train in the militias to defend themselves and the revolution.

On the highway between Ocotal and Jalapa, at a place known as Achuapa and in Salamaji, the former guards have come down several times and committed all types of criminal actions against our people. At those places they have ambushed and shot at private and cooperative transport trucks.

Noble Gesture

Recently, the members of a BIR [Presumably Revolutionary Infantry Battalion] stationed in San Fernando, which was ambushed, responded to the attack by the former guards, killing four of them and inflicting more than 15 wounded on them.

One of the contras was from San Fernando (where the Ortez family is prominent) and the body was delivered to his family for burial in a humanitarian gesture. The mother of former national guardsman Feliciano Velasquez Herrera, who joined the contras more than 10 months ago, after the funeral personally thanked the "Compas" for delivering the body of her son to her instead of leaving it in the mountains.

The body of counterrevolutionary former national guardsman Nery Betanco, who was a native of Ciudad Antigua, was also delivered. This specific act of revolutionary generosity is in contrast with the way of acting of the former national guard contras, who when they kill a small farmer, nurse, doctor or member of the Sandinist armed forces, more than likely will mutilate the bodies.

But such an inhuman action is more likely to enrage the "Compas" who fight the "Contras" with more ardor, defending the fatherland and the revolution. Another two unidentified contras were buried by the Sandinist soldiers.

Fear

The residents who live in Santa Clara, Jalapa and nearby municipalities, feel insecure when they travel in public transportation vehicles.

I traveled in one of these vehicles and I shall never be able to forget the faces, the expressions of the men and women. When they arrive at their destination or at a zone where the Sandinista authorities are, the expressions of the townspeople change immediately. They are then seen to be happy, relieved.

One gentleman who was on the same vehicle told me when we arrived at his destination: "We have passed the danger" (making a gesture with his forefinger as if they were going to shoot at him).

The former national guardsmen, supported by the Reagan Administration and the Government of Honduras, set fire to the forests in order to infiltrate, since they wear blue uniforms made in the United States [as published]. These fires have destroyed a large number of pine tree stands which the Revolutionary Government is making a great effort to reforest by means of the IRENA [Institute of Natural Resources] programs. The intention is also that of destroying part of the natural resources to harm the country's economy.

Brutality to an Old Man

Dona Bernarda Cardoza, who now lives in one of the towns near Jalapa, told us she had to leave her small eight-block farm, where she had five blocks planted in coffee and three in pasture, and a few cows, because the former national guardsmen killed an old man of 77 years named Don Lisimaco Casco near there. They dragged him out of his house one morning and shot him three times and wounded him in the eye with a machete.

Dona Bernarda declares that the incident took place in October last year near Paraiso (municipality of Jalapa). She added that after they had harvested the coffee under the protection of the "Compas," they came down to where they now live, leaving everything abandoned.

She, her mother and her small brothers feel safer with the Sandinist authorities.

Defense

Small farmer Julio Lopez Rios said that he defended his rights threatened by the former Somozist national guardsmen, that he was training to repel the invasion of mercenaries and traitors against our country. He declared that he produced corn, beans and coffee.

Segundo Calderon, who grows corn and beans, said he had joined the militias and is training to fight the former Somozist national guardsmen who do not allow him to work because of their activities in the zone where he has his property.

Lazaro Benavides Alvarado, who plants beans, corn and rice, said he had joined the militias so that he would know how to defend himself.

He added that he knew that he was defending the Agrarian Reform because the idle land of the landowners is now being given to the peasants so that they may work it and this, he said, is what the contras do not like. He added that he will defend his rights and the revolution to the final consequences.

Drugged

Sandinist fighters who participated in the battles of Macarali, where a large number of casualties was inflicted on the contras, declare that the former Somozist national guardsmen fought as they did during the time of the uprising, under the influence of drugs and hurling all types of insults.

In those battles, a large amount of propaganda and glossy posters in which they said that Pope John Paul II was with them, were seized from them.

Reservists of an infantry battalion said they were the first to make contact with the 1,200 former Somozist national guardsmen who sought to take Jalapa. They say that for 3 days and 3 nights they faced the Somozist-proimperialist enemy, who outnumbered them by four to one, inflicting many casualties to the former national guardsmen.

They subsequently received reinforcements from the EPS [Sandinist People's Army] and another reserve battalion and they finished off the enemy, inflicting more than 150 casualties on him between dead and wounded.

The soldiers of the battalion, who have been fighting for more than 5 months in the New Segovia mountains, say they have a very high morale and revolutionary spirit. They pledged in Macarali, to their comrades who fell in the struggle, to annihilate the former Somozist national guardsmen, the enemies of our people, wherever they may be found.

The battalion has had several casualties during the more than 5 months of continuous fighting against the bands and units of former Somozist national guardsmen. However, the Somozist enemy has bitten the dust.

Meanwhile life goes on in the city of Ocotal where businesses, government institutions and nearby productive activities continue in an environment guaranteed by the Revolutionary Government and the people themselves.

In the city of Jalapa, business, religious and social activities are also progressing normally. However, the people have joined Revolutionary Vigilance. Its inhabitants carry out armed patrols.

The people themselves, together with the Revolutionary Forces, guarantee that the former Somozist national guardsmen will not have the opportunity of taking the city. That city is a veritable fortress, the same as the majority of those in Nueva Segovia.

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NORTHERN FRONT

PEASANTS HELPING TO DEFEAT CONTRAS ON NORTHERN FRONT

Managua EL NUEVO DIARIO in Spanish 30 May 83 p 16

[Article by Eduardo Estrada: "War in the Mountains"]

[Text] Muy Muy, Nicaragua (ANN)--Ever since the counterrevolutionary forces were defeated in the various battles they had with the militias and Sandinist Armed Forces, the examples of heroism of the fighters, now more than ever willing to confront the enemy, have become memorable. After penetrating through the border region of Auanay along the border with Honduras into Nicaragua, a counterrevolutionary force of some 500 men, under the command of former Somozist national guardsman "Renato," managed to reach the Department of Matagalpa, 130 kilometers north of the capital early in March.

In their strategy of invasion of Nicaragua, the "contras" planned the introduction of a force into the country with the mission of sabotage and of attacking Sandinist troops to make people believe that the peasants were the ones who were waging war against the Sandinist Government.

Heavily armed with Chinese AK's, FAL automatic rifles, 60mm mortars, LAW rocket-launchers, M79 grenade launchers and other military supplies, they managed to penetrate into the interior of the country, thanks to the mountainous terrain and the territorial dimensions of the region which consists of the departments of Jinotega and Matagalpa.

From the time the "contra" forces penetrated into Matagalpa, they clashed with troops of the Sandinist Army, Territorial Militias and units of the Youth Reserve. Since then, the battles which took place in Pueblo Viejo, Rio Viejo, Muy Muy and other zones close to this municipality 60 kilometers southeast of Matagalpa, have become memorable.

The Somozist bands used pack mules for transporting ammunition and food; and terror and threats to make the peasants join their activities. They never managed to make the peasants join them nor did they find safe quarters or food after their supplies ran out.

The Guide

"The Guide," a peasant who knows the mountains of the region and a loyal collaborator of the guerrillas before the Sandinist victory, has played an important role in detecting the "contras," pointing out the exact path for allowing them and the key points at which to ambush the counterrevolutionary bands.

Peasant Ramiro Rivera, 26, Father of four children, who lives in the heart of the Matagalpa mountains, has been outstanding in this work. "All my work is for the revolution. I am willing to die for it," he said when interviewed by ANN at the agricultural-livestock complex Santa Fe of Muy Muy, where they call him the "horse breaker."

On 25 March he was asked to be a guide for some Sandinist troops who were pursuing a Somozist band, which on the first of that month had murdered 17 militiamen of the 19 July Sandinist Youth at the Rio Blanco Reserve Unit of the Matagalpa Department.

Some days later, the "contras" cut the throats of five peasants and killed three members of the Sandinist Armed Forces. These were some 300 contras who were moving through the zone, and it was necessary to find them.

Reynaldo Cortedano, 22, and a student of Agricultural-livestock sciences of the Santiago Baldovino Institute, together with Rivera, explained: "We were walking late in the day along the road leading to Pueblo Viejo, 22 kilometers to the south of Muy Muy. We entered a little hut for a drink of water, a place where some peasant friends of mine live, and they told us that 'some contras, were moving about out there,' and we then began to follow them."

In Rio Viejo

The Sandinist fighters then took a position of from 300 to 500 meters from the bridge of Rio Viejo where the contras were entrenched. There were only 20 Sandinist fighters and the contras numbered 25 or 30 and apparently were on a reconnaissance mission.

"Since we could not see the figures of the contras and it was quite late, we then fired the first mortar rounds after the first shots were fired at us. The mortars had a great effectiveness because after the first rounds we saw several of them fall dead," added Leon Duran.

After more than a half hour, the former Somozist guardsmen retreated, leaving several dead, an M-60 machinegun and rifles, in addition to other military supplies.

Three days later, when the contras, already broken up into commandos of 30, 60 and more men devoted to murdering the peasant population and to ambushing the Sandinist troops, travelled through Muy Muy in retreat toward the mountains of Jinotega, they attacked areas near Muy Muy.

In that attack, reservist and student of zoological technology Orlando Zelaya distinguished himself as a mortar man. They brought him from the people's command to set up a mortar on the outskirts, while the Sandinist troops repelled the harassment of the contras.

After emplacing the 82mm mortar, which has a range of 3,600 meters, Zelaya began to fire the first shells, which exploded that night of 18 March when the desperate former Somozist guardsmen decided to attack the town to open the way in their retreat. After the end of the battle, in which the civilian population played a great role, the contras left 8 dead covered with dry coffee leaves in the mountains of Muy Muy.

After penetrating Jinoteca, tired, hungry and defeated because of the many casualties they suffered and the failure of their "invasion" tactic, they returned to Honduras around the middle of April, where they are again preparing to attack Nicaragua.

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CONTRAS' PLAN TO CAPTURE AREA SAID TO HAVE FAILED

Managua EL NEUVO DIARIO in Spanish 31 May 83 p 8

[Article by Antonio Peredo L.: "Has 'Plan C' Ended?"]

[Text] Managua, (ANN)--The 15 SEPTEMBER, radio station of the counter-revolutionary Nicaraguan Democratic Front (FDN), announced that Jalapa had been "liberated" and that its forces controlled the entire sector a week ago, although at that time the Somozist units, which had attacked at nine points, were thrown back across the border.

The Jalapa Region, 300 kilometers to the north of here, has been the site of concentrated efforts by the "task forces" in what can be called as the last efforts of this offensive to control any zone in Nicaraguan territory.

Initially, the strategy extended along a much broader front, which covered the border zone in the departments of Nueva Segovia and Jinotega. It even covered some points of the department of Madriz. Little by little, their efforts have been concentrated but not even so have they had any results.

The essential characteristic of this offensive is the organizational method of a regular army with which it is accomplished. This is what in large measure has established the peculiarities of it. They are not armed groups which intend to settle in the guerrilla style. They are not penetration columns either. Although many of the actions are of one character or the other, the strategic objective is the wearing down of the forces of the Sandinist People's Army (EPS) at that same border.

For this purpose the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has established as an essential condition the makeup of the Somozist groups with a regular army structure. The name of the FDN expresses unification and the political leadership given them shows the objectives. Essentially, however, it is an army of some 6,000 to 7,000 men, who are mobilized according to an organizational plan with a higher advisory system and organizational weapons.

Organizational Weapons

In July of last year such a conformation was already visible. Up to then the raids by the Somozist bands had been irregular, with tactical plans, in an almost anarchistic manner. Although all through the second half of 1982 the attacks continued to be those of irregular bands, it began to be evident that they were now provided with organizational weapons.

FAL rifles, Chinese AK's, mortars of various calibers, M-79 grenade launchers, the AR-15, and more recently, the M-16 and Super FAL, replaced the previous diversity of weapons which was characteristic of the bands, and increased their firepower.

Another important element has been concentration. Although some separate camps were maintained, the bulk of the former Somozist guardsmen was concentrated in two barracks located on each side of the large triangle which overlooks Jalapa and whose upper apex is the town of Teotecacinte.

From there the offensive was begun in December last year. However, it was not until the middle of February that large-scale actions began. The two initial plans had failed and Plan C was put into effect.

The general plan of this offensive, as it was carried out, consisted in the infiltration of several "task forces" through the Quitali-Wiwili region some 50 kilometers southeast of Jalapa. One of these forces penetrated more than 100 kilometers to the wilds of Matagalpa.

Their intentions were obvious: Distract a number of forces which would force the EPS to go in pursuit of the groups. In a second wave, they would attack the points left ungarrisoned. The unit which penetrated up to Matagalpa, because of the daring of the operation, was to gather a large number of forces behind it.

In the course of these months such assumptions have not come true. The EPS has mobilized small forces since the reserve battalions (militiamen with a higher degree of training) and the civil defense of the zone have provided the largest part of the fighting men.

Contras Reduce Plans

This has been lessening the possibilities of the task forces, which finally reduced their attempts to the zone closest to Jalapa. With the rainy season imminent, which would greatly restrict their mobility, they are desperate to win a more or less lasting victory.

Therefore, it appears that the great operation known as "Plan C" has ended. Its failure was already obvious 3 or 4 weeks ago. However, attempts continued and they will continue for some days more. Some small and scattered groups have remained, one of them led by "El Suicida," who was forced to return after he fled along Chachawa.

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NORTHERN FRONT

NICARAGUAN MILITIAMEN DESERT, ESCAPE TO HONDURAS

Militiamen Presented to Press

Tegucigalpa LA TRIBUNA in Spanish 11 May 83 pp 2,3

[Article by Danilo D. Antunez: "Large-scale Escape of Nicaraguan Militiamen"]

[Text] San Lorenzo, Valle--The first large-scale desertion by Sandinist militiamen took place last Monday, when 17 members of the People's Militias, with their weapons and families, decided to seek refuge in Honduran territory.

The Nicaraguan militiamen are peasants who lived in the village of San Jose de las Papayas, jurisdiction of Somoto, Madriz Department. Eight days ago they received Czech and Soviet rifles so that they would guard the border of La Fraternidad on the Nicaraguan side.

The rifles were given to them by Commander Reiniero Antonio Tijerino, chief of the border guards in the city of Somoto, but the militiamen received no military training. They were just taught how to load and unload their weapons.

Free to Speak

The deserters were presented by the commander of the 11th Infantry Battalion located in Choluteca, Lt Col Leonel Riera Lunati, at the headquarters of the Public Security Forces [FUSEP] in San Lorenzo, Valle.

Beneath a burning sun and suffocating heat, the 17 militiamen dressed in civilian clothing and some with hats and caps, were formed into a line in the courtyard of the FUSEP of San Lorenzo and were guarded by Honduran police, who were also mounting guard in the area around the site.

Riera Lunati told them they were free to say whatever they wanted since their presentation to the Honduran press was so that they could tell the truth about what is happening in Nicaragua and why they surrendered to the Honduran Army, explaining that the government and armed forces were not trying to put on a "show," but rather trying to learn the truth.

They do not want War

The militiamen were spoken to immediately. Marcelino Carcamo, 19 years-of-age, said they were peasants who do not want war and are neither for or against the Sandinist Government. That is why they decided to seek refuge in Honduras.

Armed Peasants

Andres Padilla, 36, said they do not like being militiamen because they lose a great deal of time in training, although he said they were not trained because they are peasants with family responsibilities and have to work the land to support their children and wives.

"They only gave us the weapons and said we should protect the border and that if we found the enemy we should fight them. However, thank God we did not find the enemy and were able to arrive safe and sound in Honduran territory," he said.

Padilla said that all the peasants who live near the border with Honduras have been given rifles and those who refuse to take them are labelled counterrevolutionaries "for which reason we have to carry the rifle everywhere even though we do not know how to handle it well," he said.

The Situation Can no Longer be Borne

Sabas Garcia, 36, said that the peasant who opposes joining the people's militias is the object of persecution and that at night the soldiers of the Sandinist Army arrive at their houses to inspect them and "if possible they erase us from the map," he declared.

He said that they can no longer bear the situation. "All food is rationed and scarce. To buy sugar, soap, cigarettes, matches, rice and other articles, we have to present coupons. The situation we are undergoing is barbaric. We Nicaraguans can stand no more," he said.

He said that when they were given the rifles they were told that they had to defend Nicaraguan territory from the counterrevolutionaries, "but we are against war. We want peace, we do not want to fight for or against the counterrevolutionaries," he concluded.

Statement on Sandinist Army

Tegucigalpa LA TRIBUNA in Spanish 11 May 83 p 3

[Article by Danilo D. Antunez: "Sandinists Sometimes Kill Each Other"]

[Text] San Lorenzo, Valle--The leader of a group of Sandinist militiamen who sought refuge in Honduras, Edgar Antonio Soriano, asserted that clashes occur among the Sandinist soldiers themselves because of the existence of total confusion when the time comes to occupy positions.



The Czech-made BZ-M52 rifles surrendered by the Sandinist militiamen who deserted to Honduran territory.

Soriano reported that Sandinist soldiers dig in during the night to avoid attacks by counterrevolutionaries but they become confused among themselves and sometimes do not recognize each other and shoot at each other thinking they are shooting against the enemy.

He said they decided to come to Honduras and surrender to authorities last Sunday night because they feared for their lives, since they were only given rifles without any training. This made them easy prey for the counterrevolutionaries.

"They showed us how to take down and assemble the rifles and they recommended that we practice so that we would not forget how and that we should remain alert or the 'contras' would take off our heads," he said.

He indicated that despite the fact they did not know how to handle the weapons, they began to watch the border but saw that this kept them away from the farming activities. For this reason they decided to come to Honduras with their families in search of protection.

Soriano, as chief of the militias of San Jose de las Papayas, carried an AK-47 machinegun of Soviet make and the other militiamen carried BZ-M52 Czech-made rifles. However, they were unaware of the types of weapons that had been given to them.

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NORTHERN FRONT

FAGOTH REPORTS ON MISURATA'S FIGHT AGAINST SANDINISTS

San Pedro Sula LA PRENSA in Spanish 17 May 83 p 48

[Text] Tegucigalpa--Speaking on the television program "60 Minutes," televised last Sunday on a national television channel, the commander in chief of the MISURATA Indian Forces, Stedman Fagoth Muller, declared that rebel Indians control the northern region of the Nicaraguan Atlantic coast and he told about the last battles the Nicaraguan patriots have carried out.

In the interview held in an unspecified place, Commander Fagoth gave many details on a map of the combat region, specifically referring to the place known as La Tronquera, a town of approximately 3,800 inhabitants, where the Atchemco Refinery (Atlantic Chemical Company) is located and where the Sandinist People's Army maintains a detachment of three battalions, approximately 2,500 soldiers.

According to statements by the insurgent leader, the city of Tronquera, located between the Licos and Wawas Rivers, was protected by a primary defense perimeter consisting of 500 Sandinist soldiers, split up into 7 groups of 60 to 80 men each, which were completely destroyed by the MISURATA forces in the "Armored Operation" the Indian patriots carried out last 13 May at 0400 with a force of 900 men.

A force of 200 Indians assaulted La Tronquera, engaging in a fierce struggle which prevented the Sandinists from using the 27 Soviet tanks stationed in that city, seven of which were destroyed by the insurgent patriots.

According to the statements by Commander Fagoth, the fighting continued in that zone for the third consecutive day yesterday, with more than 400 dead being inflicted on the Sandinist People's Army [EPS]. The MISURATA forces, for their part, had 8 killed and 17 wounded.

Commander Fagoth announced that they had a large number of EPS prisoners who had surrendered to the insurgent forces.

The MISURATA leader guaranteed the life of the Sandinist prisoners, who he called "cannon fodder." He said: "They grieve us (Nicaraguan deaths) and we cannot liquidate them," referring to the prisoners in the power of the MISURATA forces.

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MISKITOS DESTROY SOVIET TANKS, PUERTO CABEZAS WHARF

San Jose LA REPUBLICA in Spanish 25 May 83 pp 8-9

[Excerpt] Situation on the Caribbean Front

The fighting situation in what is now known as the "Caribbean Front" has reached unexpected levels of intensity, levels unexpected by the intelligence services of the Sandinist government of Managua itself. The two most outstanding incidents have been, 1) the attack on La Tronquera and the destruction of seven Soviet-made T-55 tanks, which were coming from Waspam to break a trail in territory occupied by the guerrillas, and 2) the destruction of the wharf of Puerto Cabezas by a commando mission in which Miskito support forces violently entered the port city, while a demolitions group placed the charges for blowing up the structure.

Yesterday LA REPUBLICA correspondent in Honduras Mario Gomez Lenero confirmed that the port zone of Puerto Cabezas had become an inferno and that the guerrilla force commanded by marine biologist Steadman Fagoth Muller "is launching attacks at five different places of the Caribbean."

The government of Managua, which had tried to deny reports of the destruction of the Puerto Cabezas port on the Caribbean, last night had to acknowledge the truth of the incident. Commander William Ramirez, military chief for the Atlantic of the Sandinist People's Army (EPS), said: "Miskito rebels blew up the Puerto Cabezas wharf and destroyed the industrial plant for the processing of pine lumber at La Tronquera," one of the largest producers of turpentine in Central America.

The LA REPUBLICA correspondent, who has been with Fagoth for some days, said that he was able to confirm that in addition to the seven Soviet T-55 tanks, the Miskitos destroyed two artillery equipped armored vehicles and hundreds of AK-47 rifles, the military operation coinciding with the establishment of Fagoth as commander in chief of the Miskitos. His first decision was that of abandoning the name MISURASATA, which in the final part means "Asle Takanke" or "Sandinist Unity," in favor of MISURATA, which is what they will be known as in the future.

The Struggle Continues in Waspam

The operations by Fagoth and the MISURATA in the past 8 days include the attack on five key points on the strip of Caribbean coast, where the Sandinists maintained a large number of troops.

Among these places is La Tronquera with 3,800 inhabitants, where the ATCHEMCO (Atlantic Chemical Company) is located, as well as Waspam and Billwaskarma, which were occupied for 3 days, as was the city of Kum.

In the attack on La Troquera, where the plant for processing pine trees for use as lumber and for the extraction of turpentine was destroyed, Fagoth himself told the MISURAS that they were divided into 80-man groups and a "rearguard" force, besieging the place. The surprise factor was very important and after 2 hours of attack the MISURAS entered the city. The Sandinists of the EPS fled toward the Licos and Wawa Rivers or to the nearby mountains.

Correspondent Gomez Lenero says: "Fagoth then ordered a tactical withdrawal and a rendezvous at Waspam, a city located 131 kilometers south of Puerto Cabezas. Waspam has been deserted since the Sandinists began taking the Miskitos to what they call 'Indian Settlements,' while around 60 percent of the population escaped to Mocoron in Honduras.

"Once the MISURATA forces had rested, Fagoth advanced on Billwaskarma, engaging in combat with T-55 tanks, of which he damaged seven with powerful RPG-7 rocket launchers. In 8 hours of fighting, Billwaskarma was taken and when they went on to Kum, many installations of the city were burned. Kum also meant 12 hours of fighting," says Gomez Lenero.

"After Kum came an operation against Puerto Cabezas, where commando engineers with powerful explosives destroyed 85 percent of the local wharf, which is 600 meters long and was built some years ago by the Standard Fruit Company and improved by the Sandinist Government to allow the docking of ships larger than 20,000 tons on which many of the weapons from the Soviet Union and Cuba arrived."

Chamorro-Fagoth Meeting

There was a meeting between Commander Fernando "El Negro" Chamorro and Steadman Fagoth in a building in Kum, which was subsequently burned. This meeting is one of those these two rebel leaders have had in the Caribbean and north-central combat zones in Nicaragua with Commander Enrique Bermudez of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) [Paragraph as published]

The FDN with Bermudez, MISURATA with Fagoth and UDM-FARN with Chamorro have revealed that "talks for achieving the total unity of the political and military forces in the struggle against the Sandinist Government are advancing."

In an interview granted to LA REPUBLICA in the presence of Fagoth, Chamorro denied categorically that his organization had abandoned the war fronts it has opened in southern Nicaragua as ARDE recently reported and he said that on the contrary, new fronts will be opened in coming months to reinforce the actions of the FDN and MISURATA "with whom I maintain talks to achieve an alliance on the basis of respect, equality and similarity of objectives."

Chamorro said: "For this reason the southern war fronts of the Nicaraguan Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARN) cannot be left in the hands of a movement which only intends to change the faces of the Government of Nicaragua to replace them with the people of Pastora, who for 2 years--speaking the truth even if it hurts--supported the work of the Marxists of the Junta, forming part of its cabinet."

The statement was made because Pastora has been publicly criticizing the FDN and all those who seek to fight with it against the Sandinist Government, of being "Somocists" and "dangerous."

"Pastora cannot now say who are good or bad former guardsmen," said Chamorro.

"It must be remembered that after the victory of the revolution its first chief in the Ministry of Defense, whom he obeyed devotedly, was Col Bernardino Larios, former member of the Somoza National Guard."

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NORTHERN FRONT

NICARAGUAN ARMY FIRES ON HONDURAN TERRITORY

Attack on Border Area

Tegucigalpa LA TRIBUNA in Spanish 30 May 83 pp 12-15

[Article by Luis Alonso Gomez: "Army Repels New Attack by Sandinist Troops"]

[Text] Cifuentes, El Paraíso--A new aggression against Honduran territory was perpetrated Saturday at 1330 by the Sandinist People's Army [EPS], which opened fire with 30 and 50-caliber machineguns and mortars against several civilians and a patrol of the National Army.

The act of aggression was repelled by the patrol to overcome the blockade to which the military patrol was subjected. The patrol, under the command of Lt Jose Alfredo Torres Martinez of Brigade 110, which was seeking to reach the town of Las Trojes, was accompanied by reporters of LA TRIBUNA, who with the intention of reporting truthfully, entered the zone of conflict.

Before departing for Las Trojes, Lieutenant Torres told this morning paper that the situation became normal as soon as members of the Sixth Infantry Battalion took defensive positions in the zone. "Shots fired at passenger cars and civilians have decreased," he declared.

Defensive Positions

At the Cifuentes Custom House, Honduran soldiers are maintaining strategic defensive positions while the Sandinists fire continuously at our territory in an open provocation of the troops who guard over the lives and property of the Hondurans, who at this time are undergoing difficult times.

Several people coming from Las Trojes, after walking for 6 hours along paths, told the military chief that a passenger bus had been hit by bullets fired by the Sandinists positioned between El Portillo and the cemetery of that Honduran village.

The Nightmare Begins

At 1330 we decided to accompany Lieutenant Torres in order to reach Las Trojes to learn the situation of the residents first hand. The military patrol was moving at full speed, as was our driver, who skillfully avoided the potholes despite the cloud of dust left by the army command car.

Soon we heard the heavy firing of submachineguns coming from Nicaraguan territory. We were surprised by the attack by the enemies of democracy, who in similar manner had killed defenseless civilians who traveled along the same highway.

As of that moment, the volleys of shots intensified to such a degree that the patrol halted and looked for strategic positions to avoid being a target for Sandinist bullets.

Seconds later, we renewed the march with the hope of reaching our new destination, Las Trojes, and once more Sandinista bullets went by almost grazing our heads, making it impossible to continue the trip so we looked for shelter at the edge of the highway.

Army Covers our Return

At 1400, Lieutenant Torres requested help from a special company, located strategically, to cover our departure with machinegun fire. Seconds after we started, the Sandinists opened fire, this time with greater intensity to such a degree that they fired two mortar rounds which fell 50 meters from where we were traveling.

Attackers Were Repelled

In an action of legitimate defense, and in view of the constant harassment to which the civilian population of Cifuentes and Las Trojes is subjected, our soldiers adopted the most radical measures, initiating heavy cannon fire at the Sandinist positions, stopping the firing against our territory in a few minutes.

This action aroused a real satisfaction among the people of Cifuentes who said that it was time to reply with determination to the Sandinists.

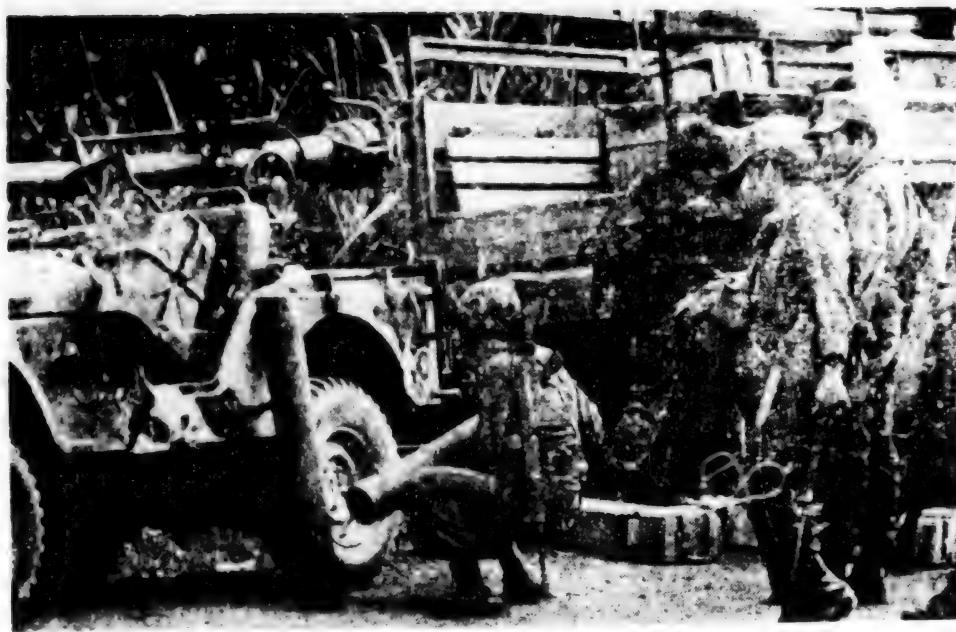
Fire Discipline

"Our soldiers maintain true fire discipline. We do not fire because we do not want to leave ourselves open to Sandinist accusations that we are the aggressors. We are only protecting our territorial sovereignty and providing security to the inhabitants of the region," said Lieutenant Torres Martinez to LA TRIBUNA.

He added: "I am sorry foreign correspondents do not come and cross this zone so that they can tell the world the truth and become convinced that Honduras is being the victim of a conspiracy. They want to make us fall into a trap but we shall continue to respond vigorously to the provocations of those gentlemen," he emphasized.

High Morale

The majority of the defenders of territorial sovereignty are young and determined to maintain the integrity of Honduras intact. "Even when we do not want war, we are ready to defend our democratic way of life at whatever price is necessary," commented the group of soldiers who repelled the aggression.



While one military contingent closely guards our border, another group prepares a 106mm cannon to repel the attack by the Sandinists.



Honduran soldiers repelled the new aggression with this 120mm cannon. "We do not want war but we shall not allow our territory to be trampled," they declared.

New Aggression

A military source revealed that yesterday morning there was a new aggression in the same zone. "In view of such circumstances, we had to use our artillery, managing to silence the Sandinists," he declared.

He said that it is not known whether there were casualties on the other side: "The aggressiveness of these people," he added, "goes beyond all limits, but we remained in our positions. The foregoing does not mean that the situation is normal because despite our presence in the zone the people are afraid. However, we shall continue to repel all acts of aggression which may take place on our border," said the source.

Emergency Road Needed

Lt Col Rolando Gutierrez Caballero, commander of Brigade 110 stationed in Ojo de Agua, spoke of the condition of the road which runs to the zone of conflict. "It is not safe to transport troops because we would be the target of the enemy forces, which would be fatal. In this respect, the necessary measures have already been taken, which means that territorial integrity has been assured," he declared.

Situation of Border People

Tegucigalpa LA TRIBUNA in Spanish 30 May 83 pp 14-15

[Article by Luis Alonso Gomez: "Army Presence Returns Calm to Border Towns"]

[Text] Cifuentes, El Paraiso-- The presence of the army in the zone of conflict, because of the constant aggressions by the Sandinists against our territory, has brought calm to the residents of this community and Las Trojes.

Cifuentes is a small village located 166 kilometers from the capital, with a population of approximately 2,000 inhabitants. It is 300 meters from the border with Nicaragua, separated only by a small river which serves as a dividing line between the two countries.

The majority of the inhabitants have left, leaving their houses abandoned to seek refuge in Danli or in some nearby villages. The exodus began as a result of the first Sandinist attacks to the custom house where two government officials were wounded.

With the presence of the army since Friday afternoon, the few residents of the place told LA TRIBUNA they felt safe.

Joaquin Ramos, a cattle dealer, explained that the situation is normal despite the threats of the Sandinists and the shots fired at civilians who traveled on the highway on bus or on foot.

"They ambushed me when I was carrying several head of cattle to Danli. The cows were wounded and the bullet holes can be seen all over the truck. Thank God I am alive and now with the army here we shall unite to defend our country," he said.

Peasant Jose Natividad Rodriguez abandoned his house because a shell fired by the Sandinists almost killed his entire family. "I shall find a suitable place to take refuge," he said sadly since he could not return to his home.

On the road before reaching Cifuentes, we met peasant Julio Ochoa. He was carrying a bed on his shoulders. We asked him why he was leaving and he answered: "The Piricuacos (Sandinists) are threatening us. A bomb dropped from an airplane fell near my house. Fortunately it did not explode, if it had, I would not be telling you the story."

Ochoa has lived in Mata de Guineo, a village 50 meters from the border. "The Sandinists control a hill overlooking the highway and the few houses which exist in the zone have been abandoned by their inhabitants," said Ochoa.

Oscar Montes, another peasant who lives a few meters from the border in Cifuentes, exhibited pieces of bombs dropped on Honduran territory by Sandinist aviation.

Montes declared that the bombs were dropped by an airplane which flew over Honduran territory in places where there are no military objectives. "We are sorry that our government, despite the fact that it has overwhelming proof, does not make complaints in time, but rather when the Sandinists are saying that Honduras is invading them," he commented.

While some women are washing clothing in the village of Cifuentes in a small stream, several soldiers watch night and day on the other side.

On the other hand, public services have been interrupted. Mail and health and educational services, because all the teachers have left the place in view of the danger of finding themselves in difficult situations.

However, the few residents who have remained declare that the Sandinists "will not be able to enter our village because there are men here who will confront them at the side of our soldiers. We remain to protect what is ours. This is not the time to flee but to fight," they said.

As the troops of the national army took defensive positions, the people emerged from their houses with enthusiasm. Someone in the group who was mixing with the soldiers commented: "Now those Piricuacos will see what fine cinnamon is." (Piricuacos means "rabid dog," a nickname for the Sandinists. "Fine cinnamon" is a very common saying among our rural people when referring to serious things).

Las Trojes Cut Off

Tegucigalpa LA TRIBUNA in Spanish 30 May p 15

[Article by Luis Alonso Gomez: "Sandinist Fire Cuts Road to Las Trojes"]

[Text] Cienfuentes, El Pariaso--Tension and anxiety was caused among the people of the eastern border with Nicaragua by the recent murder of five Hondurans as they traveled from this community to Las Trojes when they were hit by the fire of Sandinist soldiers who constantly harass the civilian population.

Up until Saturday it was not possible to travel on the road which joins the two communities, road which runs parallel to the border with Nicaragua, because Sandinist soldiers had taken up positions along a large part of the length of road and fired their weapons at persons and vehicles traveling on it.

However, the presence of members of the Honduran Army has contributed to returning the situation to normal and to making the residents feel that their lives and property are safe.

We went to this border sector with the specific mission of learning the true situation of the community of Las Trojes, located 184 kilometers east of the capital in an area called "Recovered Zone" by its residents because it is part of national territory which for many years was in possession of the Nicaraguans.

Las Trojes has more than 15,000 inhabitants, including all the housing areas which extend along the border to El Tablazo near the Rio Coco or Segovia. Its main wealth resides in small-scale farming and cattle-raising. It is connected with Cifuentes by a 12-kilometer secondary road.

However, there is little we can report in this LA TRIBUNA article to our readers because the fire from the Sandinists halted us while we were moving to Las Trojes. However, the persons who arrived at Cifuentes on Saturday told us about the situation, expressing their concern about the problems which may arise within coming days.

Roberto Marriaga, an Evangelist pastor who has lived in Las Trejos for several years, could not hide his happiness at finding himself among people he knew and particularly among the members of the Honduran Army.

"I have walked 6 hours along paths to get here. I hope this tension ends soon so that the residents of Las Trojes do not continue to undergo the constant threats of the Sandinists. The most worrisome thing is that food has begun to be scarce because food comes from Danli and business has been interrupted," said Marriaga.

We were also informed that the Health Center is closed because the doctor and the nurses managed to move to Danli. Classes were suspended at the school and many people have migrated to the mountain in search of refuge.

We are not trying to be alarmist nor do we seek to sow discouragement among our people but rather to explain the situation, which is becoming normal with the arrival of the national army.

During our tour of some 6 kilometers toward Las Trojes, we could see many houses, which have been deserted, and we noted the scant traffic on a road which normally is much traveled. Perhaps the best solution would be the opening of a new road so as not to pass close to the border as the present road does, particularly now that the Sandinists have taken positions against the civilian population.

NORTHERN FRONT

SANDINIST SOLDIERS SAID TO JOIN FDN GUERRILLAS

San Pedro Sula LA PRENSA in Spanish 8 Jun 83 p 1

[Text] Tegucigalpa--More than 20 regular soldiers of the Sandinist People's Army [EPS] joined the rebel groups of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force [FDN] in the outskirts of the town of Teotecacinte, department of Nueva Segovia, in northern Nicaragua.

The clandestine radio station 15 SEPTEMBER, the official voice of the FDN, declared that the EPS soldiers joined the "Solin" patrol. Teotecacinte has been the scene of heavy fighting between the insurgent and government forces.

Nicaraguan patriots also reported that on the stretch of road that runs from Teotecacinte to El Porvenir, a Sandinist military convoy was ambushed and a small tank destroyed.

In that action, the members of the "Rasputin" patrol managed to capture a 30-caliber machinegun, 6 AK-47 Soviet-made rifles, 5 super AK machineguns and a large amount of ammunition.

The "Cascabel" Patrol of the Pino 1 Task Force, engaged in heavy fighting with the Sandinist troops at the place known as Coyolito, inflicting many casualties in the communist ranks of the FSLN.

It was also reported that other commandos of the Cascabel Patrol attacked the military barracks of El Limon, inflicting a large number of casualties in dead and wounded to the Sandinist Army.

In another sector of Nueva Segovia, tactical operational patrols of the FDN attacked enemy positions, destroying several armored vehicles of the Marxist army.

In the sector of Los Higueros, the Rojito Patrol engaged in heavy fighting with FSLN troops, capturing an M-60 machinegun and large amounts of ammunition from them.

The 15 SEPTEMBER rebel radio station reported finally on a battle in the department of Jinotega in the northern part of the country bordering on Nueva Segovia. The Sandinist military barracks in Pantasma was attacked by the Capulina Patrol who inflicted many casualties in the government ranks.

NORTHERN FRONT

FIGHTING IN TEOTECACINTE, ALONG ATLANTIC COAST DESCRIBED

Artillery Duel in Teotecacinte

San Jose LA REPUBLICA in Spanish 5 Jun 83 p 4

[Excerpt] While Sandinist forces and insurgent groups of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) are engaged in bloody attacks and counterattacks in the northern city of Teotecacinte, a fierce artillery duel is causing enormous damage to this city and several mountain districts, within the framework of a new offensive launched by the FDN, whose soldiers fight against the army in no fewer than five nearby jungle locations.

At the same time, Sergio Ramirez, member of the Nicaraguan Government Junta, went to the northeastern region of Nicaragua where the Sandinist People's Army [EPS] is fighting the forces of MISURATA commanded by Steadman Fagoth, but for the first time in an "unbridled" manner. Ramirez was accompanied by a Cuban commander who was identified as Faustino Perez.

In Managua, the coordinator of the Junta of Government, Commander Daniel Ortega, launched a violent attack against the ranking military commander of Honduras, Gen Gustavo Alvarez, calling him "the new freebooter of Central America."

All of this coincided with the new battles in the "South Front" where the guerrillas of ARDE [Democratic Revolutionary Alliance], commanded by Commander Eden Pastora are operating, and a new meeting in the Caribbean zone controlled by the MISURATAS, where Commanders Steadman Fagoth, Fernando Chamorro and Enrique Bermudez (FARN and FDN) established the bases for a "definitive meeting" next week in which the political-military alliance will be signed which will establish three powerful "wedges" of penetration in the Caribbean and the north by these groups so as to "cut off" all the northern part of Nicaragua and control it.

Situation on the Northern Front

The artillery duel has converted the city of Teotecacinte "into an inferno" of mortar fire according to eyewitnesses, says the clandestine radio station 15 SEPTEMBER and confirmed by correspondents of the international press.

The new offensive by the FDN today is in its third consecutive day of fighting and the Nicaraguan Ministry of Defense said officially that seven contras (FDN rebels) and one Sandinist soldier have been killed in the fighting.

Yesterday afternoon, fighting continued in the sectors of El Siuce, El Porvenir, Escambría, El Corozo and Fila Coyotes, all of them along the border with Honduras.

The Nicaraguan Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a note of protest to Honduras, alleging that no fewer than 41 mortar rounds were fired at Teotecacinte by troops of that country before the rebels began their attack at five different points.

At the end of the afternoon yesterday, dense clouds of white smoke rose over the city of Teotecacinte (5,000 inhabitants) located in a "natural pass" between Nicaragua and Honduras. Several constructions and buildings were destroyed by the shells and photographer Rudolf Wedell, who takes pictures for the government, took pictures amid the flames of several families who were fleeing in search of refuge.

One of the fires was started in a tobacco warehouse, which was completely destroyed. Other buildings were also burned, it not being possible to put out the fires because of the rain of mortar shells and rifle bullets. A people's store, organized by the Sandinists, was also hit and burned.

In Nueva Segovia, the commander of the border guards, Capt Jaime Agurcia, said that in Las Carranzas, 280 kilometers from Managua, the rebels had kidnaped a peasant family of nine members while attacking in two groups.

He added that, at the same time, another rebel contingent painted the initials FDN on automobiles entering Nicaragua from Honduras at several border crossings.

He also reported on minor armed actions in Pueblo Nuevo near Esteli. Among them was the holdup of a food store by the guerrillas and at least two armed clashes without "major consequences."

Meanwhile, Honduras has its ground and air forces concentrated on "Alert 1" ordered by General Alvarez 3 days ago.

On the Caribbean Front

On the Caribbean Front, a group of the MISURATA rebels commanded by marine biologist Steadman Fagoth entered into combat at Kila south of Puerto Cabezas, in what appeared to be a new attempt to "interdict the so-called tank road" in Waspam.

Radio 15 SEPTEMBER said last night that "another Soviet T-55 tank had been damaged near Waspam," and that no fewer than 50 casualties had been inflicted on both sides in these battles.

Sergio Ramirez, member of the Junta of Government, traveled yesterday to the war zone of North Zelaya, where the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indians have rebelled under the leadership of Fagoth and supported by the FDN and FARN.

Ramirez was accompanied by Cuban Commander Faustino Perez, visiting the Bonanza mines and the settlements of Tasba Pri and Subu Mila, where the Sandinists have placed the Indians removed from the natural settlements of Rio Coco.

The Cuban commander has the title of "Chief of the Office of Liaison with Local Administration" in Cuba. In Puerto Cabezas, where a few days ago the MISURAS of Fagoth blew up the wharf, the Cuban ordered interviews with leaders of the people's organizations known as the CDS [Sandinist Defense Committee], while Ramirez spoke to the army battalions.

Miskitos Report Ambush

San Jose LA REPUBLICA in Spanish 6 Jun 83 p 4

[Excerpt] The city of Teotecacinte in northern Nicaraguan presented a scene of desolation yesterday as a result of the fighting between the forces of the Sandinist Army forces and rebel brigades of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), who engaged in a veritable artillery duel with 80mm mortars and 105mm cannon.

While in some of the areas around this city there are still large areas of forests in flames due to the effects of shells, no fewer than a half dozen buildings, a warehouse, two stores and some residences were reduced to smoking ashes.

It is estimated that in 4 days of fighting, no fewer than 100 soldiers of both sides have been killed and some 120 have been wounded.

Yesterday, at the beginning of night, at a place known as Pinares in the Fila de los Coyotas, soldiers of the FDS still continued to fight fiercely against a squad of regular Sandinist troops forming a perimeter around an artillery emplacement in an obvious attempt to destroy those Soviet-made pieces.

In Manague, the Ministry of Defense reported that "once more the counterrevolutionary offensive has been repelled," and an official note said that "the rebels took flight until they reached Honduran territory."

However, the clandestine radio station 15 SEPTEMBER refuted the official report and said fighting was continuing in the extreme northwestern part of Teotecacinte and that in the zone of El Escambrey and Los Conejos two military transport trucks had been destroyed.

A rebel source also reported that the so-called "People's store," created by the Sandinists in Teotecacinte, was not only burned as a result of a mortar hit by that it had been "attacked with an explosive dynamite charge" which four members of a sabotage group operating in the place had placed in the building. According to the story, the group had "caused other damage to Sandinist military installations," taking advantage of the attack the FDN task forces launched on the city.

Another Battle Near Waspam

In the Caribbean zone, four MISURA Indian squads of the rebel contingent commanded by Steadman Fagoth Muller ambushed an armored artillery-equipped vehicle which heading a patrol of special EPS troops sent to the region.

Reporting the destruction of the vehicle, the MISURAS reported they attacked another patrol near Waspam, seizing six AK-47 Soviet-made rifles and inflicting 10 casualties on the Sandinists, while suffering five themselves.

It was also reported that a garrison located near the mouth of the Wawa River, which had come from the zone of Billwaskarme, was made to flee the place. Taken from them was an 80mm mortar and boat with an outboard motor and a shipment of fragmentation grenades.

The Rank Road

The MISURA Movement reports say that the Sandinist Army maintains 10 Soviet T-55 tanks and no fewer than seven armored vehicles with artillery in the area surrounding Puerto Cabezas and patrolling the highway to Waspam and the interior of Nicaragua.

According to what Miskita "intelligence" was able to see, the unloading of heavy weapons, disassembled aircraft and cannon at Bluefield from a Soviet naval transport, is only part of what has been brought to Nicaragua in the past 8 days.

A prisoner captured by the MISURA in Kastras near the Licos River, said that at the Bluff at Puerto Cabezas itself, using unloading lighters (the wharf was destroyed by the MISURA 15 days ago), and in another place on the coast south of Bluff which was not identified, more than 350 tons of military material from Cuba and the Soviet Union had been unloaded.

Among this materiel are no fewer than 5 additional Russian T-55 tanks, four mobile rocket launchers, 25 armored transport cars with turrets for machineguns, three 122mm and four 152mm cannon mounted on rolling carriages with caterpillar treads (special for muddy roads) and an electronic high-frequency direction finding intercept unit which is going to be installed near Waspam for intercepting military signals and communications of the rebels in the Atlantic zone and southern part of Honduras.

The MISURA will Strike at Sea

The report by the MISURA of Fagoth says that a team of 400 specialized men is being prepared to "strike at sea," since the movement of Cuban and Soviet ships has been renewed, particularly near Bluefields, 20 miles from the tiny archipelago of the Corn Islands (Islas del Maiz), "We have had reports that a Soviet U-137 submarine landed up to 20 suicide commando instructors of Soviet and Libyan nationality."

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SOUTHERN FRONT

PASTORA, OTHERS INTERVIEWED ON FIGHTING ON SOUTHERN FRONT

San Jose LA NACION in Spanish 17, 18, 19 May 83

[Series of articles by Edgar Fonseca, who with Photographer Mario Castillo Navarro talked with Commander Eden Pastora and his guerrillas in Rio San Juan Department in Nicaragua last week]

[17 May 83 pp 12A-13A]

[Text] Rio San Juan Department, Nicaragua--Guerrilla Commander Eden Pastora Gomez appealed to the democratic western world to help him immediately with weapons and all types of resources for the struggle he unleashed against the Marxist government ruling his country.

If this is not done, he does not see any success for the guerrilla warfare he began 1 May along the river marking the border with Costa Rica in a zone located up to 45 kilometers to the north.

Pastora charged that ultraright international forces which support the former Somoza guardsmen from Honduras have completely hampered his efforts at obtaining enough weapons and expanding the struggle.

His most immediate collaborators interpreted that his allusion to those "forces" is nothing more than a reference to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States, which is being said to support the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN).

In addition to that charge, Pastora attacked the "timid and cowardly" position of the democrats of the world who are afraid to criticize a totalitarian regime in Managua because they fear their native communists.

According to the dissident commander, there is such a lack of resources that he has not even been able to arm 2,000 men properly. Despite this, he said that this month he expects to consolidate himself in the San Juan zone and he expects to travel abroad to ask for help to achieve this purpose.

He trusts that Mario Soares, possibly the next prime minister of Portugal, and Italian leaders will help him. He charged that he was abandoned by other European governments and he attacked the leaders of the Socialist International in the Caribbean who have also refused him help.



"I expect military consolidation this month."

Pastora pointed out that he headed a "peasant uprising" and that if it were to be supported it could place 20,000 men in the struggle and he asserted that the FDN has no chance to win in the northern part of Nicaragua no matter how many weapons and men it is given.

Speaking of the people of the United States, he described them as "noble lovers of peace and very humane, who at all times feel the sufferings of the people of the world."

However, he asked their government leaders to help so that there can be an honorable political solution which does not go against history. For him this latter aspect is implicit in the attempts to bring victory to the FDN military plan supported by the officers of the old Somozist army.

"Receive the welcome to this land from the stoic, patient, fighting people who are once more fighting a war of liberation, seeking the peace they deserve," he said Saturday morning to U.S. and Costa Rican newsmen who interviewed him in a jungle area of the San Juan River.

Later on he spoke to each newsmen individually.

There Will be No Alliance with Conditions

Department of San Juan River, Nicaragua--"The 'Comanche' is coming, the 'Comanche' is coming, everybody alert!"

The words, shouted by a young Costa Rican guerrilla, whose alias is "Gemelo," came from behind me.

They immediately caused a shock and turmoil in a jungle zone of this Nicaraguan department, where we arrived Thursday morning seeking an interview with Commander Eden Pastora.

At the shouts of the guerrilla, national and U.S. newsmen quickly went down a brush-covered hill on which, pursuant to instructions, we were going to spend the night.

That took place 2 days after having entered into territory that Pastora's men describe as "liberated."

"No one enters here," said "Popo," official in charge of military security for the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE) headed by Pastora, Alfonso Robelo and the native leader, Brooklyn Rivera.

Acting on another order, we went to an old ranch which Pastora approached. Bearded, smiling and dispensing embraces, he began to greet friends and strangers. Wearing not only the beard but the sweat of 6 days of wearisom walking through the jungle, and carrying a large olive green pack, Commander Pastora appeared happy.

He was quickly served a fried fish with yucca, plantains, rice and a cold drink.

He ate little and devoted himself to attending to the newsmen.

He first improvised a small press conference in which he warned that without financial help, weapons and other resources from abroad, his struggle could fail soon.

He then spoke separately with each newsmen.

Of the hours shared with Pastora, we publish part of the conversation.

Guerrilla Warfare

[Question] What method do you use in this zone?

[Answer] Guerrilla warfare. In short, strike with premeditation, stealth and advantage and withdraw. With 1,500 rifles we cannot face an army. We cannot now carry out a conventional war. Positions cannot be held.

[Question] How many men do you have?

[Answer] I have 2,000 and I cannot arm one more.

[Question] Why?

[Answer] Reactionary forces are preventing us from obtaining weapons. They hinder their acquisition. They want us to be restricted to a southern front and they are doing it. It is as if they want to use us to distract attention from what the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) is doing in the north, and we are not going to accept that.

[Question] Are you restricted to the San Juan area?

[Answer] No. We extended our action to Rivas. There we freed political prisoners from a pilot jail. We also struck at San Juan del Sur and Cibalsa. We penetrated from the river to the Carlos Fonseca and Verdun Colonies and we reach Morrillo and San Miguelito, on the coast of Lake Nicaragua. Our action is that of engagement. If we had more weapons that would be resolved quickly. I can put up to 20,000 peasants into the fight. This is a peasant uprising. We have all their backing.

[Question] And in the internal?

[Answer] Work is being done but the situation is difficult. It is much more critical here in the south. It is a thing of Titans. The Sandinist leadership knows this and will have to send the best they have ideologically.

We have fought and there are many desertions [presumably Sandinist]. In Boca del Sarapique 15 militiamen joined us, they deserted their group.

With FDN

[Question] Are you carrying out the fight independently of the FDN?

[Answer] I swear by our martyrs, by God, by my honor, that we have no ties with the FDN. These are two completely separate things. We fight for a better life and future, without hate or revanchism, filled with love for our people. Not so with them. They are anti-Sandinist and counterrevolutionaries.

[Question] Then how would you describe the objectives of the FDN?

[Answer] As being those sought by the high command of former Somozist guardsmen. There is Colonel Sandino, once he personally kicked me. There is also Captain Lau, fearful member of State Security.

They are lieutenants and captains who hate Sandinism and us because we have worthy and democratic positions, because we want a revolution filled with love. What they have is lists of persons to be shot. They have not presented one prisoner of war. We turn ours over to the Red Cross.

[Question] Of the parties in struggle, which will receive the support of the people?

[Answer] We have the support of the people. At any rate, as in a baseball or soccer game, the people shall be the referee in the field. If they do not trust us they replace us and we give up the field. But we are advancing, and because we seek to make our positive actions public, they place obstacles before us. The FDN blocks our frequency with its 15 SEPTEMBER radio station.

[Question] Could some alliance be reached?

[Answer] None with conditions. I would prefer to withdraw, to leave, or to shoot myself. How am I going to make pacts or coordinate with those who murdered my people?

His Presence

[Question] What does the presence of Pastora mean in this struggle?

[Answer] It represents the possibility that if we obtain rifles we can reach the Coco River on the northern border. I need rifles.

[Question] But did you not consider that before coming here?

[Answer] Yes, I believed that it would be easy for us once action began. Now I will have to go abroad to see how that is going.

[Question] Will there be a restatement of positions?

[Answer] Yes.

[Question] What does that mean?

[Answer] It means that we hurl ourselves into suicidal actions so that they kill us or we end the struggle.

[Question] Why so dramatic?

[Answer] What else is left? What other option is there? I am not going to "be a damned fool" with 1,500 rifles. What do you do if a powerful force prevents more weapons from coming? This situation in which we Nicaraguans find ourselves is truly dramatic, we democrats who fight from worthy revolutionary positions. On one side, we are prisoners of the extreme left, and of the extreme right on the other. Those things must be revealed. Let the world know.

[Question] When will that be settled?

[Answer] This month.

[Question] Are you pessimistic?

[Answer] No, it is pragmatism. It is a painful reality. I was optimistic when I went into the mountains filled with hope and I asked for shipments of rifles and they tell me repeatedly that they are holding them up. For a year I spoke of peace and no one helped me to obtain it. We only asked for freedom of the press

from the Sandinist Leadership, to avoid going to war. They did not want that either. No one, no government dared to even suggest that they remove censorship. Then we went to war. Now they meet on Contadora and speak of the peace of Central America and not that of Nicaragua. They are trying to save the leadership. They do not seek to save the political prisoners or a people without freedom of speech, movement or political freedom. They do not speak of that at Contadora. Robelo arrives and the PRI of Tlatelcolco, beg your pardon, of Mexico, puts him in the forefront, playing the role of standard bearer. They polish things inside so that it has a pretty finish outside. If they think they are going to save the leadership with that--impossible.

[Question] Do those forces doom you to failure?

[Answer] Not Pastora and the ARDE. The ones they doom are the Nicaraguan people. They doom the effort for freedom, democracy and peace.

[Question] What message do you have for the Costa Ricans?

[Answer] We ask the people of Costa Rica to help us, to express their support, that they do what they did when we were fighting against the Somoza dictatorship of the right.

I believe that things are difficult now for the Costa Rican Government because they have the Communist Party working against it with strikes. But let the people who are traditionally democratic and lovers of freedom and peace help us from political positions. And also let them obtain rifles for us. We need weapons. These are people with their arms outstretched asking for rifles. Help us.

[18 May 83 pp 12A-13A]

[Text] San Juan River Department, Nicaragua. For two weeks now the Nicaraguan patrol launch has not cruised the waters of the San Juan River.

Before that, it passed every two days in a challenging attitude with 200 soldiers with a 50-caliber machinegun.

They went from the port of San Carlos on Lake Nicaragua to resupply the military posts installed along the river to the Atlantic with supplies and men.

Today the San Juan is a ghostly waterway.

With a few exceptions, operations by the Nicaraguan Army are accomplished basically by air.

In its 198 kilometer course to the Atlantic, the river is seen to be more calm than normal. It is very dangerous at the same time.

On its banks there is a foreboding silence.

At times residents witness the passage of rotting corpses.

These are persons thrown into the stream who lost their lives in the fighting of the Nicaraguan conflict.

The San Juan stinks of gunpowder and death.

At night, generally, there are some men who move on the river.

They operate under the cover of darkness, surreptitiously. They travel silently on the river and they bring their boats with all types of military equipment to the banks.

They are young and old. Many are veterans of many years of war.

They were born, reared and lived in an atmosphere of war. They are in the majority peasants and workers who feel betrayed by the commanders of the Sandinist Front because of the totalitarian direction they are accused of giving the revolution.

The River has Become a Ghostly Waterway

These men, hard faced, some of them wrinkled by the pain produced not only by the inhospitable climate but because they are far from home in the midst of danger and with their future perhaps written on a bullet, are members of the guerrilla group commanded by Eden Pastora Gomez of the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE).

The presence of Pastora in this zone perhaps means for them a relief from the burden of feeling almost abandoned, with more ideals than resources in these hellish jungles.

There are not only Nicaraguans here. There are also Costa Ricans and Panamanians. They say there are also Venezuelans but we could not see them.

"Pacheli," "Caricature," "Yankee," "El Viejo," "El Negro," "Ramiro," "Francisco," "Gemelo," "Domi," "Ricardo El Tico," "Juan" and many other aliases they use are all part of the ambience.

Some have a high morale. Others, faced with the hardship of the situation, wrinkle their faces even more and whisper their intense desire to return home in the ears of the visitors.

"I have not seen my wife in months. God grant things go well with us and we can get out of here soon," commented one of them, who was armed with an M-16 rifle, which he managed to obtain with great difficulty.

Commander Pastora asserts he has 2,000 men but that because of a lack of resources he has not been able to arm them properly.

He even declared that he could put as many as another 15,000 into action if he were to receive help.

He speaks openly. His men listen. They feel a sense of impotence in their throat. But they remain silent.

He arrived at noon at one of the makeshift camps and he encouraged them. The orders are that they must not remain at one spot too long. "It could be fatal. The enemy pursues us and may ambush us," added one of Pastora's principal lieutenants.

How to Act?

The regulations for the guerrillas are varied and strict.

Smoke and talk as little as possible. If you smoke, bury the butts. If you talk, do so in a low voice.

They walk from 0500 to 1800. They sleep when night falls. The "champas," or rustic huts in which the guerrillas spend the night, are built in a few minutes.

The next day there will be another walk and always on the alert. According to Commander Pastora, they have engaged in many battles since they began their activities on 1 May.

"The peasants implore me, they weep for me to provide them with weapons. I do not have them. Many of them join me hoping to obtain them later," confided Pastora subsequently.

However, little by little, and as a result of fighting actions, they have been acquiring weapons and ammunition. These are old AK's of Korean manufacture. They also carry FAL rifles and some, the more fortunate, carry the M-79, a deadly weapon which launches grenades capable of destroying things and men in a large area.

One of them is carried by "El Viejo." He is 53 and comes from Nandaime.

This is not the first guerrilla war in which he has been involved. "Hey toughy, you look good for the fighting," he yells at a comrade near a fire.

He encourages the hunched-over man with the bitter wrinkled face, lean of shank and with an injured finger. He justifies his presence: "I came fleeing from communism."

Further away there is a young man with Chinese features. Straight tangled black hair. His name is Roger Arguello. He was born 27 years ago in Los Chiles de Alajuela.

He is concerned about what is happening there and he speaks in a low voice. He is serious. We then find out that he is a leader in Pastora's group. He is a commando leader.



He asked that we take a message to San Jose and that we publish it.

It is addressed to a brother who works in the Nicaraguan Ministry of Interior. Besides pointing out that he is in the mountains fighting for freedom and against communism in his country, he tells his brother:

Costa Rican Leads a Rebel Squad

"I want to appeal to you to abandon your post at the service of nine commanders and join in the struggle against those who have deceived our fraternal people."

"I am writing this message using my rifle butt as a desk, the same rifle I shall wield in the defense of democracy, with faith in God and with the conviction that Central American shall never be dominated by Godless and enslaving ideologies," he said.

One and Another

Carlos Fonseca Vargas, "Richard el Tico," who until last year was the owner of the "night club" Las Mascaras in San Jose, is 35 years-of-age and divorced.

With the objective of fighting so that what is happening in Nicaragua will never have to be suffered by Costa Rica, he decided to join Pastora. His skin burned by the tropical sun, it is noted that he is covered with bites from jungle insects. "This is very hard but one must look on the bright side," he said.

El "Negro," a former Panamanian guardsman, 29 years-of-age, the tallest in the group, brings a note of happiness to the scene.

He talks endlessly, "I cook, wash clothing and take care of myself. That is the way my mama taught me in the San Miguelito district in Panama, from whence I came," he says in an unmistakable accent.

"I came because I liked the guerrillas and I have not liked communism."

"We shall fight until we have cleaned up everything in Managua," he said. "The rhumba," that is what he called the war, "is good. I am staying here and I continue to like it."

Among other gifts he received from the newsmen were: A quartz watch, binoculars, new olive drab pants, a multiple use knife and, particularly, friendship and affection.

"Ramiro II" who next 1 August will be 60, was more serious in his way of acting. He is a native of Leon and he joined the struggle in July 1981.

"I was a union leader in Leon and the communists tried to use me. I did not let them and they pressured me and removed me," he said.

We Shall Drive the Cubans out with Bullets

Dennis Alberto Valle Espinales, 34, known as "Yankee," has been in clandestine activities for a year. He was a truck driver in Managua.

The Sandinist Defense Committees (CDS) began to persecute him because he would not join the Sandinist People's Militias (MPS). "They wanted me to pull guard duty and I did not agree," he declared.

He fled from San Jose with his wife and four children. He sends them his regards and he emphasized that he is well and asked that they write to him at the address they know.

Jose Gilberto Calvo Sandi, single, 17, father of a little girl, is a resident of Escazu and he went to the mountains as soon as Pastora called for the initiation of struggle at the beginning of the month.

"My decision is to help a fraternal people to rid themselves of the militias they have. Communism is using Nicaragua as a means by which to spread to Central America and Latin America," he said.

Calvo's alias is "Gemelo." He was a heavy truck driver and with his parents, who knew what he was doing, he went north.

He is determined to fight until communism is expelled "because if it is not, things will get worse," he expressed.

Stories and statements continue minute after minute, hour after hour.

Each one has a story to tell of his past, his present and his future.

"We all have a past. There must be some reason we are here. We all came with a one-way ticket. We do not know about the return ticket," he added.

We Contribute a Drop of Water to Put out the Fire

"Juan" a small bearded man, Pastora's personal doctor, a native of Granada and 47 years-of-age, pointed out that he seeks the freedom of his native land.

Malaria, rheumatism, arthritis, fungus, colds, and respiratory infections are illnesses he says the guerrillas are exposed to, however, if there is conviction, none of this weakens them.

As "Pacheli," a young Granada native of 29 with a degree in marketing, the main lieutenant of Pastora in the mountain, said: "Our greatest desire is to come out alive if God wishes. If not, we offer a small drop of water to put out the fire burning in my country."

"Pacheli" has been fighting in the guerrillas since 10 May 1978, when the Somozist guard killed his brother. That night he killed a guard.

"That was the first man I killed in my life. When I saw him fall my mouth went dry. I have not forgotten that feeling up to now," he said.

Today, despite the fact that he is a person who eagerly awaits the day when civilians prevail over the military, he has taken up the rifle once more.

"We are following the path of Sandino. Just as he chased the gringos out with bullets, we shall now chase out the Cubans and internationalists who trampled our native land, with bullets," he concluded.

[19 May 83 p 12A]

[Text] They describe themselves as passionate lovers of freedom.

They yearn for democracy and peace.

However, they are at war.

From their idealistic conversations it is gathered that if they were not cowed by an earthquake and the former dictatorship, the totalitarian system will not cow them either.

"I am an Indian," said Eden Pastora at one moment of the hours spent with the newsmen. Perhaps that is the reason he is so obstinate about being subjected to conditions in his struggle.

At the same time, however, he revealed a characteristic rebellious nature.

Today, Pastora, who since July 1979 warned that he would keep "a careful eye open so that the revolutionary process would not become weakened or be betrayed," is fighting in the jungles of the San Juan River, Nicaragua.

How long will the struggle last? What could be the results?" The quick reply is given by the rebels themselves when they acknowledge that the path will be long and hard. They do believe they will win.

Puppets or Independent Allies

In San Jose, Engineer Alfonso Robelo, political leader of ARDE, is cautious when he speaks.

He unhesitatingly supports the complaint made to the world from the jungle by Commander Eden Pastora about the lack of help in weapons and other resources.

However, he emphasized the fact that Pastora's men are already an important military force, although with insufficient resources.

"It is a paradox," pointed out Robelo, 43, "we ask for rifles for peace."

However, he warned that it is time that the great democratic powers cease committing "the very grave error" of seeking to create "puppets instead of independent allies with democratic stability."

"The puppets do not have popular support," he reiterated.

According to his point of view, despite the adverse results of efforts to obtain weapons abroad, he will continue his mission, particularly in the political field.

He intends, he said, to make people aware so as to obtain a more significant support in the international field, since it is his opinion that internally "the leadership ARDE has is not present in any other organization."

As far as Robelo is concerned, that is based on the revolutionary, although not communist, position maintained by the members of that movement.

The former Nicaraguan official, who left the National Reconstruction Junta of his country on 22 April 1980, added that if there is no support from governments then "let the men, organizations and parties help us."

There are 8,000 Cubans in Nicaragua

In this aspect, and asked about the complaint by Commander Pastora with respect to the scant political support received from nations such as the United States, Engineer Robelo pointed out that there is a great imbalance between democracies and totalitarianism.

While the Soviet Union and its satellites such as Cuba with Fidel Castro or Libya with Mu'ammar Qadhafi, bend the laws to suit circumstances, and act without controls, in the western democracies the situations are "terribly bureaucratic."

In Moscow, Havana and Tripoli, according to him, there are no senates, congresses or a public opinion to criticize, hinder or control certain aid.

He pointed out the case of Cuba, which has 8,000 men with military training in Nicaragua, although not all of them are soldiers and many of them are described as technicians in agrarian reform. There is the incident of Qadhafi and the clandestine shipment of weapons to Managua discovered in an alleged shipment of medical supplies.

In the democracies there is control, and it limits the efforts of movements such as the one he leads. Nevertheless, he reiterated that he has received support and will continue working "because many times the political struggle is more important than the military."

He added, however, that aid should not be conditioned in such a way as to compromise the interest in freedom and autonomy of the ARDE.

"We have no reason for kneeling when asking for weapons. We shall always maintain a position of integrity. If the conditions are elections, democracy, social justice and peace, we welcome them.

"However, we are not willing to sacrifice the independence of allowing Nicaraguans to decide on the future, the path along which we wish to travel," he declared.

No Matter from Whence it Comes

"The important thing about weapons is not their origins but against whom they are used and the freedom of conditions on them. We must not be tied hand and foot," he added.

Engineer Robelo backed Commander Pastora 100 percent in the "S.O.S." he sent to the world. Primarily, as he said, because it makes the democrats see that in Nicaragua there are revolutionary forces which are not tied to the past, and that they want to overthrow a Marxist regime. "That would be a historic milestone," he said.

He went into the "tremendous support and combativity demonstrated by the people at this time; while on the side of the government forces there is disillusion, they do not fight and almost as in the previous struggle, they are almost reduced to staying in the cities. They do not emerge from their garrisons."

"That," he said, shows their (the Sandinists) enormous weakness and reveals our strength in patriotism and combativity.

"The problem," he said, "is weapons. Conditions must change.

"We are engaged in a process without revenge in our hearts. We favor the reorganization and reunification of the Nicaraguan family and its demilitarization. There is an excess of militarization in the country."

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CSO: 3248/915

PASTORA ACCUSES PLO OF INTERVENING IN NICARAGUA

San Jose LA REPUBLICA in Spanish 18 May 83 pp 6-7

[Article by Carlos Vargas Gene: "The PLO Intervenes in Nicaragua"]

[Text] Commander Eden Pastora revealed for the first time that he has two sons, Alvaro, 19 and Panfilo Eden 15, fighting at his side on the South Front, "seeking freedom."

The Real Possibility of Death

Commander "Zero," leaning on his semiautomatic AR15 rifle in the midst of the huge mountains of southern Nicaragua, speaks of his family and says: "In my wife and children there is a mixture of feelings. On the one hand they are happy that there is the real possibility of freedom for our native land and on the other, the real possibility of death saddens them."

"My daughters," says the commander, "feel proud of their brothers and their old man," and adds: "As I told you, the real possibility of death and my 47 years-of-age are no obstacle, they are not a problem. I play around just like my boys and that rejuvenates me. They, for their part, are always looking out that the old man does not get into trouble and here we are, the three of us together, seeking the freedom of Nicaragua."

Pastora Reveals Intervention

Commander Pastora, who with the same vehemence rejects U.S. intervention "which gives help to the FDN forces in the north," as he does the intervention of the communists in Nicaragua, asserted that he personally "knows of the intervention by Cuba, the PLO and the Bulgarians" in his native land.

"The intervention by the Cubans, he said, "is the most dangerous because it is disguised more easily. They speak our language, have the same color eyes and skin and their presence is much less noticeable than that of another race."

Pastora declares that the struggle on the Atlantic coast is entirely controlled by Cubans and there are about 3,000 of them in the EPS (Sandinist People's Army).

Pastora said he has personal knowledge of the presence in the army, air force and militias of Chileans, Palestinians of the PLO and Cubans. Those of the PLO completely control the air force and are the pilots of the P-33 aircraft of the FAS (Sandinist Air Force), although there are also Bulgarians and Cubans in it.

"The jet and turbine aircraft are piloted by members of the PLO and the radar which has been installed in several places was assembled by them. They have also taken part in the training of commando-type troops.

Pastora Reveals Plots against Him

Pastora, who assures us he "is safer in the Nicaraguan jungle than out of it," revealed that he has had reliable information that PLO commandos have searched for him to liquidate him, as have specialized Chilean, and recently, Salvadoran groups. "Fortunately, we have always learned about it in time and we have thwarted their attempts," says Pastora.

Pastora Accuses Tomas Borge

Commander "Zero" accused Tomas Borge, member of the Junta of National Reconstruction of having indirectly caused the death of Carlos Fonseca Amador, when he (Borge) with Henry Ruiz "forced him to go to the mountains, being, as he was, a man who was practically blind. Placed in the mountains, they never gave him a contact for entering the camp, and Henry Ruiz left him abandoned, accompanied by only four men," One of them was Claudia Chamorro and the other was "Ruben," Francisco Rivera. [Paragraph as published].

The Jungle Odyssey of Fonseca Amador

"Borges had Carlos Fonseca Amador walking in the Nicaraguan jungle," asserted Pastora.

"There were four men, he made the fifth one. The founder and commander of the political-military organization, which with more life had lasted in America; the commander in chief of the organization, and Borge never gave him the contact for getting to the main camp for fear that he would take command away from him, because whenever he arrived, he would be the commander."

Pastora recalls that "in those 9 month Fonseca Amador lost his glasses and since he was very nearsighted, he was left practically blind. Native peasants saw him and they took him by the hand, guiding him while he was supported by the shoulder of his comrades. In those 9 months they killed two of his companions and only two men were left: "Ruben", Francisco Rivera [sentence as published].

"Zero" said: "Commander Francisco Rivera, hero of many battles, wept as he told me that."

"Shortly thereafter," asserted Pastora, "The small group was ambushed and the guard killed Carlos Fonseca Amador. That was during Holy Week of 1977."

"I ask," says the commander, "Who killed him? The guard was the instrument but he was killed by Tomas Borge and Ruiz, who now weep for him," said the guerrilla.

Pastora saved the Life of Tomas Borge

Commander "Zero" says that on three occasions he saved the life of Tomas Borge, who today calls him a traitor.

"Once," says Pastora, "it was in San Pedro Catacamas in 1960, when Harold Martinez was going to machinegun him, the one who is now commander of the South Front.

"That time," recalls 'Zero,' we were at a safe house and Tomas Borge had asked the Cuban Government to jail Alejandro Martinez, brother of Harold, and when he met him in Honduras, in Catacamas, when he saw him, he pulled out his sub-machinegun to kill Tomas Borge. On seeing this, I threw myself on Harold and struggled with him hand to hand so that he would not machinegun him. In the struggle Harold said to me 'Let me go, I am going to kill this...' I said 'no,' I will help you kill guards but not comrades.'" [Paragraph as published].

"Meanwhile," explained Pastora, "Tomas remained petrified, sitting in his chair, until I told him: 'What are you waiting for, Man? can you not see they are going to kill you?' Then he left in a hurry. I saved his life that time."

The Story of "Chico Chiquito"

"I saved his life again in 1972," said Zero. "The Guard was chasing us and Tomas became exhausted. Then, weeping, he told us to leave him there, to save ourselves. Then "Chico-Chiquito," Denis Hernandez, the brother of "El Callado," who was killed in Jinotega, and I carried Tomas.

"And do you know what Tomas did when he entered Managua?" asked Pastora. "Well, he allowed them to kill 'Chico Chiquito.' They imprisoned him and 15 days later they ordered him killed.

"I used to go to the jail to see "Chico Chiquito" in Macondo, but I could do nothing because he was under the orders of the Directorate. One day I did not find 'Chico Chiquito.' I asked for him and they told me: 'Man they came to get him on orders from Tomas.'

"I was glad and thought: 'Man, that is good, they released him,'" explained Pastora. He was a peasant leader who had fought for more than 12 years. He was famous in the north.

"Days later I met Tomas and I asked him: 'Tomas, where is "Chico Chiquito?"' He answered: 'They ordered him killed.'

"Why?" asked Pastora and he says that Borges answered: "On orders from higher up."

"By God, I felt frightened," said Pastora. "I who say that I am never afraid, felt frightened there...The man who carried him on his back, who carried him when he was exhausted--tired the guards would have caught him--he did not save "Chico Chiquito's" life.

" 'Why did you do nothing to prevent them from killing him?' I asked, and the answer from Borge was simply: 'He would have rebelled, he would have rebelled up in the mountains because he was undisciplined.' "

I am Not a Traitor

"Borge accuses me of being a traitor, but let some one tell me who I have betrayed," said Pastora. "We say they are the traitors, those who convert the affair into a question of semantics. But they did betray the people whom they told one thing to get them to make the revolution and now they are doing something completely different.

"We are fighting exactly to prevent the real Sandinist revolution from being betrayed, to rescue the principles which were never those of delivering the liberated country to the intervention of the communists. Sandino was a liberator not a slaver."

A Common Denominator

The aspiration for liberty, democracy and political pluralism appear to be the factors which form the common denominator of the fighters on the South Front commanded by Eden Pastora.

Some in one way, others in another, all express the same sentiment. Among the fighters there are some Panamanians, as we had already said in previous articles, and there are also some Costa Ricans.

One of them, "Richard," gave us a letter for his parents, who do not know where he is. He asked us to have it published. The original of the missive was delivered to "Richard's" parents last night together with a picture of him taken in the mountains by Mario Castillo, as he asked.

"Richard" wants the youths of Costa Rica to know why he is fighting in the mountains of Nicaragua. This is his letter.

"Dear Parents:

"Not until today will you really know where I am...I am writing from somewhere in Nicaragua, where I placed myself, without pressures from anyone, under the orders of Commander Eden Pastora Gomez to fight for the freedom of our fraternal country, a freedom which was betrayed.

"First I must make it known that I fight for the young Nicaraguans and children, who are suffering what our fraternal country is suffering, primarily under Cuban domination. The mountains are hard but one becomes accustomed and I believe that for any person, including myself, who fights for a just cause, the greatest pleasure is to die in the mountains in which the fight is going on."

"Up to now I am well, I do not know how I will be later on, but I shall always remember you as you will remember me.

Until I do not know when."

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CSO: 3248/935

SANDINISTS SAY PASTORA NARROWLY ESCAPES AMBUSH

San Jose LA REPUBLICA in Spanish 20 May 83 pp 6-7

[Text] Official Nicaraguan sources declared that "Eden Pastora was born again yesterday," when he miraculously escaped, together with his men, from an ambush prepared for him by the Ninth Infantry Battalion under the command of Lt Ivan Tercero. When Tercero thought he had him trapped and that Commander "Zero" "could have been liquidated," Pastora and his group vanished into the jungle.

The ambush which almost liquidated Eden Pastora, according to a Ministry of Defense source in Managua, took place north of Punta Poponjochar on the eastern shore of the Great Lake of Nicaragua, when troops of the Sandinist People's Army (EPS) detected the presence of Pastora. After a rapid exchange of gunfire, the Sandinists found several "posters" with photographs of the rebel commander and printed appeals to the population to rebel against the government and warning that "real Sandinism is among your people."

Operation Augusto Cesar Sandino

To commemorate the 88th anniversary of the birth of Gen Augusto Cesar Sandino, Commander "Zero" carefully prepared what could have possibly been the most important blow in the war he is waging in the mountains in south Nicaragua since last 1 May, when the deadline given to the Sandinist directorate and the internationalists to leave the government and call for free elections, passed. It was a surprise attack on the EPS military garrison, a center for the distribution and storage of weapons and ammunition for the various garrisons of the Sandinist Army and the people's militias in the eastern region of Lake Nicaragua.

Commando Operation

Operation Augusto Cesar Sandino against the military garrison of El Coral was a typical commando operation, which in addition to being that of the greatest penetration up to the time by the guerrillas of Pastora counting among them the attacks on Cibalsa and Rivas, it is the one in which a large number of selected guerrilla troops participated.

The lightning attack, which left the physical installations of the military stronghold completely destroyed, was accomplished by two converging columns, which fell upon the objective at 1400 yesterday. One column consisted of 85 guerrillas and the other of the 50 artillerymen of the squad and the personal escort of

Commander Pastora. The attack lasted exactly 18 minutes and was initiated by a squad of shotgun wielders and another of artillerymen who "bathed" the military post with rockets launched from RPG-7 rocket launchers.

The insurgents reported no casualties on their side and declared that "due to the destruction of the installations and the rapidity of the attack, they do not have an estimate of the number of casualties the enemy may have suffered."

They Collected Weapons Ammunition and Documents

Official spokesmen of the guerrillas of Eden Pastora reported yesterday that they had seized ("recovered") a large quantity of weapons and ammunition, as well as important documents at the El Coral military garrison.

The assault, which was personally directed by Pastora, "was a complete success and was an important homage to the memory of the inspirer of the real and only Sandinist revolution," said ARDE spokesmen.

It was a Typical Guerrilla Action

The operation was planned with great meticulousness and was actually initiated last Monday when the Pastora columns in groups of 10 men began to march toward the objective with full equipment.

Commander Pastora and part of the squad of artillerymen was very far from the point chosen for the attack--El Coral--because it had departed for the region of La Guinea to meet with a group of national and international newsmen (LA REPUBLIC published a very extensive report on this interview in days gone by).

All day Monday and Tuesday and the morning of Wednesday, the guerrillas advanced slowly through the mountains to rendezvous around 1030 on Wednesday at a point previously agreed upon, where they reviewed details of the attack.

Helped by peasants of the region, who served as guides, all the squads arrived punctually and exactly at the site of the rendezvous from where, after resting a few hours, they deployed in a fan-shaped formation for the attack.

Seven minutes before 1400, the entire zone appeared to tremble as fire was initiated simultaneously with rockets, machineguns and rifles.

The EPS soldiers were taken completely by surprise.

The guerrillas of Pastora seized all the weapons, ammunition and documents they could and 18 minutes later the guerrillas of Pastora disappeared among the brush and swamps existing around the El Coral military post.

The guerrillas regrouped into the small groups of 10, which had made the converging march, and they began their withdrawal.

ARDE spokesmen insisted that the "retreat" was in a forward direction because the guerrillas, upon terminating the action, moved even further into Nicaragua.

The Ambush by Lieutenant Tercero

A short while later, after the guerrillas had begun their retreat, once the objective of the Gen Augusto Cesar Sandino attack on the El Coral military post had been achieved, troops of the Ninth Infantry Battalion of the EPS managed to ambush Pastora and the small group which accompanied him.

According to the official story by spokesmen of the Ministry of Defense of Nicaragua, the soldiers of Lt Ivan Tercero "were able to infiltrate through the group of Eden Pastora" and after surrounding it, tightened the noose but Pastora was no longer there. "Pastora was born again yesterday," was the comment by the Nicaraguan Government spokesman.

8908

CSO: 3248/935

SOUTHERN FRONT

GOVERNMENT, ARDE CASUALTIES OVER 300 AS OF 16 MAY

San Jose LA NACION INTERNACIONAL in Spanish 19-25 May 83 p 13

[Text] More than 300 persons killed or wounded was the result of guerrilla actions carried out by Commander Eden Pastora Gomez up to 16 May in the south of Nicaragua.

According to a recount by ARDE headquarters, 298 of the victims were killed or wounded in the Sandinist Army.

On the other hand, the insurgent forces acknowledged having had 37 casualties in killed and wounded during the weeks from 1 to 15 May.

One hundred of the government casualties, added ARDE spokesmen, were caused by the confusion existing in the Sandinist Army itself in the Rio Maiz zone on 11 and 12 May.

Troops sent by the Ministry of Interior to that zone to fight the rebels under Pastora clashed by mistake with members of the Sandinist People's Army (EPS).

In the zone, according to Commander Pastora, even an airplane of the "Push and pull" type crashed during strafing operations. In San Jose it was confirmed that the license number of the airplane was 02337.

During interviews granted to newsmen, Pastora emphasized the fact that the EPS does not disseminate information on incidents on the Atlantic Coast and the border zone of San Juan, as it does on military activity in the northern region.

He pointed out that the EPS is interested only in emphasizing the attacks of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), which is accused of being linked to Somozism.

The dead in the south are of no importance for them," said Pastora. In that broad sense the struggle unleashed by him is genuine, by revolutionary, democratic Sandinists against those who betrayed the people in the process which began 19 July 1979 with the fall of the Somoza Dynasty.

On the other hand, the results of guerrilla actions perpetrated between the evening and night of 17 May in El Coral and Papaturro, sectors located near Lake Nicaragua, were unknown until 18 May.



Panamanians, Costa Ricans, Venezuelans and Nicaraguans fight alongside Eden Pastora in the south of Nicaragua

It was known only that Pastora's men destroyed police headquarters and administrative offices in both towns. There was, however, no exact report on casualties.

Actions

Pastora's forces brave military fire at 1015 on 1 May when a guerrilla column engaged in combat with an EPS patrol at El Toro Rapids, San Juan River.

A Sandinist subofficer was captured there. He was identified as Danilo Lugo Davila, later delivered to the Red Cross, which returned him to Nicaragua.

On 3 May they attacked a **ferry** donated by East Germany, which because of the low water level of the San Juan River could not go further west than the mouth of the Infernillo River. On 5 May they inflicted 22 casualties on the Sandinist Army in the La Fonseca sector of Nueva Guinea, 45 kilometers north of the border with Costa Rica.

The guerrillas carried out harassing actions in Rivas, San Jorge, and the military headquarters of Cibalso on 9 May. In the first city they attacked the pilot jail and freed political prisoners.

Another of the more intensive actions took place on 10 May at Punta Gorda, Atlantic zone. A 14-hour battle was fought against 180 soldiers of the EPS.

According to confidential reports, the men of Pastora plan an intensive offensive in coming days in the area of the Maiz River.

They were also waiting for the delivery of 800 rifles, which were to be distributed among rebel Indians of the Miskito, Sumo Rama Sandinist Unity (MISURASATA), who support Pastora and are led by Broocklyn Rivera.

0908

150: 3245/916

SOUTHERN FRONT

ROBETO DENIES ARDE HAS MADE AGREEMENT WITH FDN

San Jose LA NACION in Spanish 13 Jun 83 p 20A

[Article by Edgar Fonseca: "Robelo Discards Possibility of Understanding with FDN"]

[Text] In the short term, at least, there will be no understanding among the main forces opposing the regime of the Sandinist National Liberation Front (FSLN) which rules Nicaragua, said Engineer Alfonso Robero Callejas, a leader of the Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE).

He discarded the idea that there can be unity with the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) as long as "its staff consists 100 percent of former national guardsmen. That represents a danger that they will return to power as a military institution in Nicaragua," he said.

Robelo was questioned, in view of insistent rumors in recent days that an alliance between the ARDE and FDN is about to be effected, in which he allegedly had participated intensely.

"I have participated in no meeting. It has not taken place between the organizations which are completely independent," he said.

He made his contacts with people of the FDN within a strictly personal framework.

He said he had contacts only with civilian members of the FDN, with whom he even has a family relationship.

"I see a hidden hand which seeks to confuse the Nicaraguan people in the sense of trying to make us appear to be the same thing when we are two independent parties," he said.

Engineer Robelo, who together with Eden Pastora, the military commander, head the ARDE, conditioned any possibility of "a change" in things with respect to the FDN to that organization having "purges which will guarantee that there will be no return to the past."

However, he said that any possibility of understanding is discarded as long as the hierarchy of the FDN military staff consists of former Somozist guardsmen.

From that point of view any possible alliance "is totally unacceptable" to ARDE he said, although he acknowledged "If there is a cleanup, things would change."

Difficult Struggle

With respect to ARDE military action, he described it as "successful" because of the support it has had among the peasants, at the same time, however, admitting it is difficult because of financial and logistic problems.

In the political field, he emphasized that they are fighting for a solution which will avoid "bloodshed and destruction for the Nicaraguan people, although we are not going to allow ourselves to be deceived," he explained.

With respect to the military field, he declared, ARDE continues to consolidate its positions and he declared that in no longer than 30 days he will have 3,000 armed men. "Our progress is geometrical. A true peasant rebellion is taking place in Nicaragua," he said.

He then censured some statements made Friday by Sandinist Commander Daniel Ortega in which he ironically showed himself willing to talk with U.S. officials but not with Nicaraguan opponents including Pastora.

Ortega maintained on that occasion that they would talk "with the owner of the dog but not with the dog."

In that respect, Robelo read an ARDE communique in which they deny having masters and they categorically reject obeying Soviet or U.S. imperialism.

"Only the liberating force of our own nationalist convictions will banish foreign masters. Those who today have masters will have to be able to explain to future generations the injustice of their behavior," they say.

They remind Ortega: "Do not forget that there is no foreign master without a national servant."

Finally, ARDE revealed that harassment of the Sandinist People's Army (EPS) continued in the sectors of Santa Fe, Machuca and Bartola, department of San Juan, during the weekend.

These are part of the actions for intensifying military activity soon. No more details could be obtained.

5418

SD: 3248/935

UNITY, ARMS, POPULAR SUPPORT NECESSARY FOR REBELS

San Jose LA NACION in Spanish 22 May 83 p 6A

[Article by Lafitte Fernandez R. and Edgar Fonseca: "Unity, Arms and Popular Support Would Seal Rebel Victory"]

[Text] The attainment of unity, weapons and an ostensible popular support are the three conditions which today begin to signal the possibilities of victory for the 9,000 rebels, who fight the Sandinists in the mountains of Nicaragua.

Although the rebels have not yet managed to fill those requirements, they have in a short time showed that they are the greatest challenge to a regular army with 10 times more men and weapons, which does not seem to show a real unity.

But that is not enough. The three groups, which today fight against the government forces, know full well that the time is what most conspires against them because they have only one chance: They either fill the requirements or they will face an irrevocable failure.

Some of the conditions urged and proposed by observers of the present process have been half done.

This gives the rebels the authority to announce that Nicaragua is once more on a war footing, although it will also be necessary to wait for some time to pass to clarify a conflict in which there are no winners as yet.

Unity

The Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), Revolutionary Democratic Action [ARDE] and the Nicaraguan Revolutionary Armed Forces are the three groups which today fight the Sandinists from their hiding places in the jungles.

Of the three, the members of the FDN show the greatest willingness to unite, although they are also the force which contains the largest number of antibodies [as published] as far as the men led by Eden Pastora are concerned.

In the midst of this, the troops of the Revolutionary Armed Forces commanded by Fernando Chamorro, "El Negro," --perhaps smaller in number--also show a willingness to unite although it has been said that the man who dared to single-handedly bomb the bunker where Somoza hid in 1979, charges Pastora with having an unbridled egocentricity.

However, few doubt that the real difficulties in achieving an alliance appeared a long time ago among the leaders of the FDN (whose men fight in the north of Nicaragua) and those of the ARDE, who led by Pastora, fight in the south of that nation.

That division allegedly originated in an accusation which the Sandinist commanders have repeated for a long time: that a large number of the FDN soldiers are former Somoza guardsmen.

However, the problem cannot be simply stated. According to reliable reports, the differences are not among the men of both groups who wield their rifles against the Sandinists.

Rather Pastora accuses the FDN military leadership of consisting of former officers who were always loyal to Somoza before he was overthrown in 1979 and who have not yet been identified publicly.

"We are not against the fighters who were Somoza guardsmen but rather against their principal leaders," said an ARDE spokesman who asked not to be identified.

Despite this, there is a move in the FDN to put an end to those accusations by saying that while it is true that some high Somoza officers command the 7,000 men who fight the government forces in northern Nicaragua, the former president died physically and politically in 1979.

It is known that none of the three groups rejects or discards dialogue. On the contrary, next 30 September has been set as the deadline for achieving the necessary military alliance among the rebels.

It is precisely that shadow of time that will force the chiefs of the three groups to hurry in the next 4 months to achieve unity, although possibly it may not be achieved unless there is some type of change in one or another organization before that time.

That alliance would produce an effective coordination in search of military objectives, better definitions on the war fronts, and a common effort for providing weapons, food and ammunition to the rebels with which they can withstand the furious attacks by the troops loyal to the Sandinist commanders.

Popular support

Isolatedly, each guerrilla organization claims important military victories, with which no attempt is made to achieve permanent control of territory but rather to inflict the largest number of casualties on the enemy for the time being.

Amphibious or sudden and lightning-fast attacks against the troops stationed in some towns or barracks, have up to now been some of the methods most used by the rebels.

However, there is no one who asks if they really have popular support. That is the key for determining the success of a guerrilla struggle.

The support of the Nicaraguan residents for the rebels wherever they pass is more obvious every day, although up to now it is a solidarity which is expressed in the darkness of the mountains or small towns.

That is why it is believed that such support should be mainly measured in the large cities, where up to now there have been no open confrontations between the rebels and Sandinist military forces.

The leaders of the fighting groups assert that they have that support and that it has not yet been shown in the cities for two basic reasons: because the conditions that will allow popular collaboration with the rebellion have just begun to evolve and because of the repression exercised by the machinery of the Nicaraguan State against those who help the guerrillas.

In the south, as well as in the north of Nicaragua, the rebels say: "If we did not have popular support they would have even thrown us out of the mountains themselves. It is not possible to wage guerrilla warfare without support. They would have kicked us out. However, the people hide us, feed us and give us all types of help."

However, to increase the possibilities of victory, the guerrillas must make that help more obvious and arouse a real insurrection that will cause such an upheaval among the Sandinists that it will literally be impossible for them to fight any battles, as occurred in 1979.

Eden Pastora has a quality which few of the fighters hiding in the north have: He is a very well-known man, and even loved by many Nicaraguans, which favor his hopes of swelling his ranks of fighters.

He has even said that he can arm up to more than 20,000 men (as published), a larger or similar number than those who caused the fall of Somoza. But...what about weapons?

The right to support could also be a measure of the results of 40 months of Sandinist government and the effects of the gigantic propaganda machine the Managua regime uses to win supporters for its plan. It will allow seeing whether the Nicaraguans really are willing to support an administration which in the opinion of the opposition only represents another advance of international communism.

weapons

One of the most desperate statements by Eden Pastora took place some days ago in the mountains in the south of Nicaragua. "I need weapons," he said almost in a demanding tone to all the democratic countries of the world.

That also allowed one to note a discrepancy which could be resolved by means of an alliance: The FDN forces possibly have a surplus of weapons in the north, although Pastora needs them in the south.

The legendary "Commander Zero" said that the Socialist International (organization which enfolds the social-democratic forces of the world) does not help him, and revealed that he does not even have a million dollars to support a costly war.

Almost immediately the highest leaders of the FDN said they could help him, providing him with the weapons he needs, although Pastora rejected them and said that first he would have to know who makes up the military hierarchy of that organization.

The fighters in the north are said to have connections with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States, officials of which are said to have provided the modern weapons with which they fight in that region.

However, despite the advantage they have over Pastora and the forces of Chamorro in that field, when the possibility that foreign help may be reduced to that front is mentioned, they reply: "The people are going to go ahead, even if they have to do it with sticks and stones."

It is undoubted that if the rebel forces grow in the degree believed by their principal leaders, they will need more and more weapons and more money with which to buy them, which cannot fail to be an enormous problem for the military strategists.

It is said that without weapons no military victory is possible. Perhaps, however, a fourth factor, which in fact is beginning to be considered as of now, is the position adopted toward that conflict by the nations of the world. That is why Nicaragua has not ceased to be the center of attention for a long time.

8908
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SOUTHERN FRONT

NICARAGUAN-COSTA RICAN BORDER ZONE AREA OF INSURGENCY

Clandestine Activities Reported

San Jose LA NACION in Spanish 2 Jun 83 p 6A

[Text] The resurgence of clandestine activities by anti-Sandinist rebels on the North Pacific coastal zone, which includes sectors such as La Cruz, Penas Blancas, Conventillos and Puerto Soley, was revealed yesterday by Col Oscar Vidal, director general of the Civil Guard.

He pointed out that reports in that respect were sent to him in recent hours by Col Rodrigo Rivera, commander of the Northern Command located at La Cruz. He added that measures were immediately intensified to break up the insurgent outbreak.

Simultaneously, the Security Council yesterday ordered the release of Nicaraguan soldiers Miguel Escoria and Miguel Garcia arrested 19 May in Mexico de Upala.

"We received terrific treatment," said soldier Escoria, referring to the care received from our authorities during the days they remained under detention here. Nicaraguan Ambassador Rogelio Ramirez expressed his gratitude for the "act of good will" of the Costa Rican Government in this case.

At the same time, it was learned at the Ministry of Public Security that the Civil Guard assumed control of the town of Tiricias de San Carlos in which, according to constant reports, groups of heavily armed strangers are active. They are presumed to be members of the guerrilla organization of Eden Pastora.

La Cruz

Colonel Vidal said that after 12 months of intensive action in the area of La Cruz, Sapoa, Orosi and other sectors against Nicaraguan rebel groups, stories are now being heard again about how they intend to regroup and unleash hostilities.

These are people who are alien to the region, linked in one way or another to the movement which fights the Sandinist National Liberation Front (FSLN).

Vidal pointed out that always within the firm government decision to maintain neutrality on the frontier zone, it has ordered intensification of vigilance and patrolling.

He added that he has made contact with the commander of the Sandinist People's Army (EPS), Commandante Alvarez, of Jinotepe, with respect to the case of farmer Jose Cerdas, who was kidnaped 13 May in Balsamito de Verdun, Santa Cecilia.

Although last Saturday Nicaraguan officials said that they had already released him, his family charged that it is not true.

Colonel Vidal emphasized that he confirmed via telephone that Cerdas remains a prisoner but that they had promised him that no later than today they would release him. They argued that because of immigration problems he had not yet been released.

Soldiers

Elsewhere, yesterday at 1707, Maj Rodolfo Jimenez of the Ministry of Public Security delivered soldiers Escoria and Garcia to the Nicaraguan Embassy in the California district.

They acknowledged they had entered national territory in pursuit of anti-Sandinists but that they had not done so with premeditation.

Escoria emphasized that Costa Rican authorities gave them a treatment like that deserved by any human being. "It was terrific," he repeated. Despite that he said that at first they were roughly spoken to." I was insulted, they shouted that I was a "Piricuaco," he declared.

The soldiers will probably not leave until Friday, since today is a holiday and their departure cannot be processed due to the procedures they have to go through at Immigration.

Ambassador Ramirez Mercado also declared that he will request the return of two Soviet AK machineguns [as published] taken from the soldiers.

The release of those soldiers was ordered by the Security Council after it was confirmed that they committed no crime in the country.

Tiricias

With respect to the situation in the town of Tiricias, in the Ministry of Public Security it was said that reinforcements of recent graduates in infantry missions of the "Cobra" police company will probably be sent to the zone.

Colonel Vidal agreed that many complaints are arriving at the Ministry of Public Security because of the presence of armed strangers in the region.

That is why Major Barrantes was ordered to investigate. As of this week a group of 10 guards, who it is expected will be reinforced, have been stationed there.

Similarly, there will be changes in guards throughout the region.

Situation in Los Chiles

San Jose LA NACION in Spanish 9 May 83 p 8A

[Article by Hubert Solano: "Los Chiles, Between Powder Smoke and Military Fires"]

[Text] The small border town of Los Chiles is blanketed today by the heavy smoke of powder from the rifles of the insurgents and Sandinists and from the burning of hundreds of hectares of mountain for strategic military purposes.

For the purpose of controlling navigation on the San Juan River, in recent days there has been an outbreak of many attacks in the zone against the positions of the FSLN army.

The rebels who unleashed these actions belong to the groups of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), commanded by Fernando "El Negro" Chamorro [as published] and of the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE) led by "Commander Zero," Eden Pastora.

Those Affected

In the insurrection, Los Chiles, with some 4,000 inhabitants in the center and about 16,000 in the entire canton, has been affected in various ways.

Fear of an attack by the Sandinists is the greatest concern of the inhabitants. The degree of nervousness has reached such a point that the blowout of a heavy truck tire in the center of that place caused several people to react because they thought that it was the beginning of a military action and they began to pack their bags.

There is concern also because they have only one doctor, one nurse and two aides. Neither do the people know what to do in case of an attack or if there is a wholesale evacuation. The hospital has been under construction for several years and they expect to inaugurate it next June.

On the other hand, the system for effecting surveillance of the border used by our Public Force is mainly characterized by the installation of fixed posts, some of which do not even have a communications radio set.

Our police are fed only rice and beans and have to sleep on cardboard on the floor and although some carry Soviet assault rifles, considered the most powerful in existence, they may have only one or two clips for those types of weapons. Those weapons were taken from Sandinist Army deserters.

"Therefore, the morale of the border troops is not very high," said one of the officers.

Dead Business

Meanwhile, business between Los Chiles and the lake port of San Carlos de Nicaragua, is dead. Because of the isolation of the place from the rest of the country before the highway was built, all trade was carried out with San Carlos and other Nicaraguan places.

Traditionally, some 150 women carried out an exchange of products and earned some 500,000 colons weekly. Due to the problems which arose when the presence of the rebels was noted, the Sandinists demanded confidential information from those women as to who were "contras" or "compas" in Los Chiles, as well as other details having to do with the presence of our authorities there.

The situation of "espionage" reached such an extreme that two weeks ago the Public Force prohibited travel along the Frio River, waterway used by the women to go out of the Lake of Nicaragua to reach San Carlos.

In their efforts to save their business, it was discovered that some of them carried lists with the names of persons who were friends or enemies of the Sandinist Front, and more recently they provided information on the presence of Rural and Civil Guard reinforcements in Los Chiles.

Today those women face the specter of unemployment. Many are single mothers. The men generally devote themselves to raising basic grains, livestock raising and lumbering.

"Colleagues"

It is usual among the inhabitants to call a stranger "colleague." In this manner they avoid mistakes when they address someone whose support for the rebels or the Sandinists is unknown.

This is due to the fact that the anti-Sandinists want to be known as "brothers," while those of the FSLN use the diminutive "compa" from the term of fellowship "companero."

If a Sandinist is called "brother," it is an offense. The same thing happens when a rebel is called a "compa." That is the reason for the use of the word "colleague" to avoid embarrassing situations.

Forest Fires

The responsibility for the devastation and burning of hectares of mountains along the roads and border at Los Chiles is blamed on each other by the Sandinists, the rebels and the Public Force.



In El Cachito, Los Chiles, members of the Public Force patrol near the border with Nicaragua.

This work reveals a task of strategic-military type for maintaining good visibility on those routes and preventing surprise attacks on the edges of the roads themselves.

Border Patrolling to Increase

San Jose LA NACION in Spanish 27 May 83 p 4A

[Text] A greater patrol activity will be put into effect on the border between Costa Rica and Nicaragua independently by the authorities of both countries, according to an agreement yesterday by national and Sandinist Government officials during the course of a surprise meeting held in Penas Blancas on the Nicaraguan side.

The vice minister for Public Security, Johnny Campos, headed the Costa Rican delegation to that meeting. He was accompanied by Col Oscar Vidal, director of the Civil Guard, Col Jose Montero, chief of the Liberia Command, and Col Rodrigo Rivera, commander of the Northern Command located in La Cruz.

Campos said that the Sandinists showed themselves to be very concerned by the ever-increasing harassment to which they are subjected by guerrilla forces of dissident Commander Eden Pastora Gomez, particularly along the San Juan River.

The representatives of the Sandinist People's Army (EPS) were headed by Commander Roberto Calderon, military chief on the southern border, and Commander Rene Vivas, vice minister of interior.

The meeting took place in some offices located on the Nicaraguan side. It began at 1100 and ended at 1300. Initially it had been proposed that meeting be held in national territory but it did not happen that way for unexplained reasons.

The delegates of the EPS repeatedly charged that the insurgents led by Pastora use the southern bank of the San Juan River in Costa Rican territory for launching their attacks.

The national mission rejected the charge and asserted that the rebels carry out their struggle in Nicaraguan territory. Moreover, they presented statements made by German correspondents who suffered an ambush Tuesday on the San Juan River in front of the national sector of Tiricias.

The Germans declared that the attack came from Nicaragua, although they then confessed that they were taken to the southern bank to receive medical attention.

In view of these differences, the authorities of the two countries agreed to make "an independent check" of the river bank belonging to each nation, according to the communique by Vice Minister Campos.

Asked if such verification meant more patrolling, he said yes but said that it did not mean an increase in the number of guards in the region.

Campos said that what will be done will be to patrol zones which have not been under surveillance up to now.

According to him, the meeting was held in a "normal, not very tense nor exaggeratedly cordial" atmosphere.

Release

The military men of the EPS said they released farmer Jose Cerdas, also of Nicaraguan nationality but who has lived for 10 years in Balsamito de Verdun, Santa Cecilia de La Cruz, a week ago.

According to the national report, Sandinist soldiers arrested him at his farm. The Nicaraguans argue that they arrested him on the other side of the border when he crossed to look for a calf.

Because they could not prove anti-Sandinist ties, they released him, although he stayed in that neighboring country with relatives. Sandinist officials promised to present him to our authorities so that he may give his version of the incident.

They also showed an interest in the release of soldiers Miguel Garcia and Miguel Escoria, arrested Thursday 19 May in Mexico de Upala.

Vice Minister Campos told them that if after studies on the legal status of both of them they do not warrant being brought before the courts, their situation would be resolved by the Security Council next week.

The Sandinists urged that the three boatmen recently taken by the guerrillas in the San Juan River be returned. They were told that they are already free and may return to Nicaragua whenever they want.

Another case discussed was that of a Costa Rican named Rubio, who was arrested on the Costa Rican border at an unspecified place 3 days ago. There were no more details on the case although the Sandinists argue that they also arrested him within their jurisdiction.

They were also told of the concern aroused because of the way two young men, Roberto and Jose Quesada, arrested in the San Juan River on 5 May, were returned.

The Sandinist military men alleged that they turned them over to youth authorities because they believed that since they were not officials they did not deserve any greater formality. The national delegation said the return of them should have been made through our ambassador in Managua, Professor Jesus Manuel Fernandez.

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YOUTHS CAPTURED BY SANDINISTS ALLEGEDLY TORTURED

San Jose LA NACION in Spanish 27 May 83 p 4A

[Text] Costa Rican youths Roberto Quesada Mejias, 15, and Jose Quesada Pena, 20, charged they were subjected not only to physical but psychological tortures. They were released Wednesday in Managua after being imprisoned for 20 days under the accusation of carrying out anti-Sandinist activities. Both were turned over to national authorities of the border post of Penas Blancas at 1247 yesterday. The operation was carried out by a youth delegation of Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans.

They were received by officials of the Rural Assistance Guard, who brought them to San Jose where they made statements to officials and newsmen.

The two youths admitted being linked to one or another form of anti-Sandinist Guerrillas who operate in southern Nicaragua.

Quesada Mejia said to attorneys Roberto Steiner and Martin Trejos, that he had collaborated with the insurgents for 4 months. In turn, Quesada Pena was explicit with respect to his activities with the rebels and he did not discard the possibility of rejoining the anti-Sandinist movement. He believes that if he is ever taken prisoner again, they will not torture him, "surely they will shoot me," he added.

With them on that occasion, a young Nicaraguan identified as Aurelio Ruiz was also arrested while they were traveling in a boat on the San Juan River off the outlet of the Infiernillo. He did not return and his fate is unknown.

According to the recently freed youths, they were on a boat on the San Juan River heading for the house of a woman with the surname of Talavera, located in national territory, where they were going to pick up some merchandise to be used by the guerrillas of Eden Pastora Gomez.

Quesada Pena was traveling with Ruiz and they passed by the farm of Quesada Mejias, who paid no attention to the warnings of his father and joined them. They were later held up by a squad of soldiers from the Sandinist People's Army (EPS), who forced them to land on Nicaraguan territory where they arrested them. Quesada Pena and Ruiz, who were carrying two AK rifles and were wearing olive drab uniforms, had their weapons taken from them. Young Quesada Mejias was not armed.

Movement

First, they were taken to the Castillo Viejo barracks and then to the port of San Carlos. There they cropped their hair. "Actually, I did not ask them why they did that. I expected worse things," said Quesada Pena, a resident of Aguas Zarcas and a farmer.

In San Carlos, he recalled, they were very frightened. "The militiamen began to shout, asking that we be turned out into the square so they could have some fun with us. That meant so that they could hit us with rifle butts, beat us and then possibly shoot us," he declared.

According to Quesada Pena, at that town "we prisoners were the subject of tortures consisting of blows with fists and elbows and kicks to different parts of the body. We did not say all this in Nicaragua because we were afraid of reprisals."

He added that they made the decision not to speak or reveal ill treatment because the possibility of release would become complicated.

Quesada added that they were taken by air to Managua. They were held in El Chipote prison on Tizcapa Hill, where they hold political prisoners now.

Young Quesada Mejias said that there are some 30 cells crammed with prisoners there.

During this period they were subjected to interrogations on the activities of anti-Sandinist groups in Costa Rica and on whether national authorities were collaborating with them. To all of which they replied in the negative. Days before being released, they were taken to a prison installed at a center called "Zona Franca" where they say Sandinist woman commander began to intimidate them by speaking in a loud voice about the characteristics of coffins and their own height.

That day, according to Quesada Pena, the woman commander, who was around 26 years of age and dark skinned, upon seeing them asked "What our size was so as to be able to put us in a coffin, and one of the guards answered that it was too expensive, that it would be better to put us in plastic bags since they were cheaper and easier to handle."

The guards also threatened them with the firing squad. "Some authorities who questioned us called us stupid and asked why instead of making a revolution against Nicaragua we did not make it against Costa Rica so that there would no longer be the exploitation of man by man," said Quesada Pena.

For them the uncertainty as to whether they were going to return safe and sound to the country was prolonged until Wednesday, when shortly before being turned over to the youth delegation, Minister of Interior Commander Tomas Borge arrived and warned them that depending on the statement they gave, they would be released, declared Quesada Mejias.

MISKITO CLAIMS SANDINISTS KILLING INDIANS

San Jose LA NACION in Spanish 8 May 83 p 10A

[Text] The murder in the past 2 years of 500 Indians living on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua by soldiers of the Sandinist army was revealed by Bruno Gabriel Peralta, youth leader of the MISURASATA [Miskito, Sumu and Rama Sandinist Unity] organization.

He fled to our country a month ago and described himself as one of the military chiefs of the Indian anti-Sandinist guerrillas, who now fight from the north to the south on the coast against the regime of the nine commanders of Managua.

Gabriel regretted that his organization lacks the weapons necessary for facing the attacks by government troops sent constantly to crush the Indian uprisings.

He said that even before some armed groups, which now are seeking to overthrow the Sandinist regime, entire Indian communities rebelled on the Atlantic.

They have always opposed the Marxist orientations that some have tried to impose on the revolutionary process and extend to the native population.

Indian leaders believe, he added, that the life of the communities in a geographical area of 59,000 square kilometers with a population of some 275,000 people, should take place pursuant to their native culture and not according to imposed orientations alien to their history.

That is what intensified the clash with the Sandinist National Liberation Front (FSLN) to such a point that the youth completely refused to join organizations such as the army, the militias or the 19 July Youth.

Gabriel said that throughout these months, no fewer than 56 communities have been razed and 12,000 Indians have been concentrated in camps such as the one called "Tasbapri."

The natives, he added, have therefore been forced to fight defensively. According to Gabriel, there are some 50,000 Indians engaged in clandestine activities, poorly armed and trying to defend themselves from government military actions in which Cubans, who have arrived from Angola, and other foreigners, take part.

"Our mission is almost one of recovery of weapons so as to survive," he said.

"However," he said, "the objective is the uprising of the Nicaraguan people until a true state of freedom of speech, political, pluralism, mixed economy and a condition of total progress is attained."

He concluded: "In search of this, we have saved several surprises in the next few days for the nine mercenaries who misgovern our country."

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CSO: 3248/919

FRG JOURNALIST CAPTURED BY ARDE GUERRILLAS

Says Captured in Nicaragua

San Jose LA NACION in Spanish 28 May 83 p 6A

[Text] West German newsman Walter Schutz confirmed to attorneys of the republic that he and two fellow citizens who were taken Tuesday in southern Nicaragua by Eden Pastora guerrillas, were attacked from the territory of that country.

The statement was made Thursday at 1730 at the Biblica Clinic before the attorney for international affairs, Francisco Villalobos and Attorney General Martin Trejos.

Schutz was taken by Nicaraguan rebels who ambushed troops of the Sandinist People's Army (EPS) at a sector of the San Juan River in front of the Costa Rican town of Tiricias.

Taken with Schutz was Heidrum Lotz and Valentin Schwab, who was also identified as a correspondent of television network W.D.R. of Bonn.

Lotz suffered a grenade fragment wound in her left eye.

She was taken in serious condition by air to Miami and then to her country.

Schutz and Schwab remain to recover here with minor wounds.

In this statement, certified by state notary Fernando Casafont Odor, Schutz confirmed that they arrived at the zone to film a boat donated by Germany to the Nicaraguan Government, which it is said was destroyed by the guerrillas on the San Juan River.

According to the newsmen, when they were about 600 meters from the boat "we were attacked with rifle grenades and fire from the Nicaraguan bank of the San Juan River."

He recalled that at the time of the attack they were helped by two of the three Nicaraguan civilians who were with them in their boat. They do not know what happened to the third.

With the help of the two others, they reached the Nicaraguan bank, where, confused, they crawled along the ground for some 60 meters. He added that a 4-hour battle was fought there and that at 1130 they were approached by a guerrilla patrol, which first made them move toward the Atlantic in a boat and then took them to the south bank to the home of a peasant where they were received by the "commander of the zone" and other uniformed men. He added that they were treated cordially and then they were placed in an area whose national ownership they did not know. He made emphasis of the medical attention they were given.

Then for several hours they were moved in vehicles until they were delivered to a German diplomat at 0300. "Up to that moment no Costa Rican authority participated," said Schutz.

"I wish to add that when we were in the camp Commander Pastora called and apologized for what had happened and told me that the 'pericuacos' knew that the area was a war zone. He also told me that when we were well he would try to grant us an interview, declared the German.

Makes Statement in Managua

Managua LA BARRICADA in Spanish 29 May 83 p 5

[Text] "We were in the midst of an intense battle in Nicaraguan territory, but the base, the headquarters from which they attacked is in Costa Rica," Walter Schutz, one of the German newsmen of the FRG yesterday. He is one of the FRG newsmen who was wounded and taken to Costa Rica by counterrevolutionaries of the group led by traitor Eden Pastora Gomez last Wednesday.

Schutz who is the Central American representative for the program "International Doctor," arrived yesterday in Managua on the Aeronica flight from San Jose, capital of Costa Rica. He was received by Minister of Culture Father Ernesto Cardenal and by officials of the Ministry of Health, institution through which the assistance of the program is channeled, as coordinated by the German newsmen.

Very calm, the 40-year-old German, who is approximately 1.9 meters tall, told newsmen that traitor Eden Pastora Gomez labelled him a communist and a member of the Sandinist People's Army [EPS].

He confirmed that the beasts of Pastora Gomez, move from one side of the San Juan River to the other and he described the things said in Costa Rica, that the attacks made are only a problem of Nicaragua, as absurd.

To say only that the fight was in Nicaragua is part of the truth but not the whole truth, said Schutz.

He, Heidrun Lotz and Valentin Schwab, also newsmen, were in the camp of the counterrevolutionaries located in Costa Rican territory for around 9 hours.

Walter was interrogated for 3 hours by members of Costa Rican national security, said the German newsman.

Costa Rican Authorities Know It

By the very fact that he made objective statements on what had happened, Walter confirmed that Costa Rican authorities know that the counterrevolutionary camps are in Costa Rica.

"I informed them of the incidents and there is no reason for me to hide anything, why should I?" asks Walter. "The Costa Rican authorities knew where we were, they learned it on Thursday," reiterated the newsman.

Asked why they did not make statements on their arrival at the Costa Rican capital, Schutz said they were very tired because they also had to walk a long way and moreover there were other priorities at the time, one of which was caring for the serious wound suffered by their reporter companion Heidrun Lotz.

"I know I did wrong as a journalist, but at that time there were other priorities," he said.

Heidrun is already in the Federal Republic of Germany but Valentin remains in a clinic in San Jose until he has recovered a little more.

My Work is not an Adventure

Walter represents the "International Doctor" organization in Central America since February 1982. When we asked him whether he would continue working in the area after this experience, he said: "For me work in Central America has never been an adventure and that is why we are going to continue!"

He evinced surprise at the psychology of traitor Eden Pastora Gomez because while he was at the counterrevolutionary camp he offered to grant them an interview on the radio but the following day he accused him of being a communist and an EPS doctor.

It is Pure Propaganda by the Traitor Pastora

Schutz also demonstrated annoyance because his surname has been written incorrectly in the media and specifically has been published as if it were the name of the U.S. secretary of state.

He said the counterrevolutionaries examined the equipment they operated, their passports and later they still attacked them as being communists.

"I believe there is confusion but that is propaganda by Pastora for his illusions," he said [As published]. At the same time he said that perhaps some former friends of Pastora Gomez could explain about the strange psychology of the traitor.

He said that in the short time he was in the counterrevolutionary camp, which is small, he saw a typical guerrilla camp with two plastic first aid shelters, weapons (Chinese AK's), radios and materials from the United States.

They say (the contras) that they buy them on the black market, commented Walter, who added that his stay in the camp was really very short and for that reason could offer no greater details.

Ambush Described

San Jose LA REPUBLICA in Spanish 28 May 83 p 6

[Article by Carlos Monterrosa, LA REPUBLICA correspondent on the Southern Front: "German Says There are Camps in the Country"]

[Text] Mountains of Nicaragua--At around 2130 Tuesday 24 May, the Porfirio Melendez combat column was camped near the left bank of the San Juan River after a hard day of fighting in the La Valencia zone on the edges of Miguelito Ravine. The sentinels who watched the river sounded the alarm and the forces which were resting took previously established positions at points near the water. From there we saw how several barges were carrying Sandinist troops downriver. They numbered nearly 200 men. The troops received the order not to fire if we were not discovered, and all remained crouched at our posts. The vessels passed downriver and we advised the ARDE columns, which were further down, about what was happening so that the staff could decide whether some of those columns should march to the river to intercept the barges.

Guard posts near Diamante and El Guis Islands later on reported the passing of the vessels but had received orders not to intercept them. Each of those posts has but a few men and their work consists of detecting movements on the river.

The guard post near the outlet of the Infiernillo River did not report the passing of the vessels, which the General Headquarters interpreted as meaning that those vessels had landed on the river bank between El Guis Island and the rapids of El Diamante. For this reason it ordered the Manin Rener, Luciano Vilchez and Candelilla squads to move along the mountain during the night, along the banks of the Agua Fresca River toward a point near the one at which we were.

At 0530 of the following day--25 May--our force saw two vessels with soldiers come down the river. After a rapid deployment along the left bank of the river, fire was opened on those forces, a battle being waged between the members of the Sandinist People's Army [EPS] and our forces.

The men in one of the vessels managed to reach land despite the casualties they had suffered while in the vessel and those on the other vessel landed shortly afterward, a battle beginning which lasted around 3 hours.

We were unaware that those two vessels were bait to point out our positions so that the men who had gone downriver the night before could find us and come up behind us, placing us between two fires because actually the occupants of the

vessels who had gone downriver during the night had landed and gone into the mountains and were waiting to hear the noise of the fighting so as to attack us from the rear, as they actually did, catching us between two fires, that from the troops on the vessels which had passed in the morning and that of the troops on the vessels which had passed at night and who were now attacking us from the mountain.

We notified the Ramon Raudales Column, to which the Manin Rener, Luciano Vilchez and Candelilla Squads belong.

While that was happening, a small vessel with six persons on board appeared on the river. Four were wearing military uniforms and one of the other two was a woman. One of the columns coming to our support attacked that vessel, which overturned. After the fighting it was confirmed that there were three wounded Germans. The other occupants had died in the fighting.

Our support forces took the forces attacking us by surprise, falling upon their rear. Those forces fled.

The fighting that took place near the outlet of the Agrua Fresca River near El Diamante Island inflicted 40 casualties on the Sandinists among dead and seriously wounded who could not walk. Another 20 were also wounded but retreated under their own power, fleeing along the mountains. Forces of the General Ramon Raudales Column pursued them and this correspondent is unaware of the results.

The three wounded Germans were captured in the overturned vessel in which they were traveling and taken to a field hospital at which they were given first aid. Then, under guard, they were taken to other camps, while contacts were being made for turning them over to the International Red Cross or the German ambassador in Costa Rica, this correspondent being unaware of the result of those actions.

One of the captured Germans was recognized by members of the General Ramon Raudales Column as a doctor of the Sandinist Front, who has been working for about a year in the Sandinist Front in several missions. It was said that at this time he was serving as a "field doctor" with the EPS.

ARDE forces had three men wounded, none of them seriously, who were cared for in field hospitals of the zone and soon rejoined their units.

The surprise the EPS sought by landing troops to surround the Porfirio Melendez squads, turned into a surprise for them when their rear received the fire of the Manin Rener, Luciano Vilchez and Candelilla squads, being caught between the column in which I was and those which arrived as reinforcements.

German Asserts There are Pastora Camps in Costa Rica

German citizen Walter Schuts, insisted he is not a doctor as the Managua Government and International Medicine of Frankfurt says, but a newsman with many years as a professional, confirmed yesterday in a press conference held at the home of

London BBC correspondent Martha Honey in the Rohrmose district of this city; that they were ambushed in the water of the San Juan River in Nicaraguan territory, 5 minutes by boat from the Castillo Viejo post. He said they were taken prisoners by ARDE guerrillas on Nicaraguan soil after a battle of more than 4 hours during which they remained hidden in the brush at the edge of the river.

Mr Schutz asserted that he and his two companions, Heidrum Lotz and Valentin Schwab, seriously wounded in the fighting, were treated with great consideration by the Pastora guerrillas and that in response to their request for medical treatment, they were taken to Costa Rican territory where there is a guerrilla encampment with a hospital hut, doctor and nurse where they were given preliminary treatment.

The ARDE guerrilla camp on national territory, according to the statement by Schutz, is located a few kilometers from El Diamante Island (near the place known as La Tiricias), place which he knows very well because last year he took some pictures of the ferryboat "Groeoeln," which the city of Bremen gave to the Nicaraguan Government, and he was now going to finish the job.

Nicaraguan Authorities Guaranteed Safety to Newsmen

Mr Schutz, who will return to Managua within a few days "to investigate the whereabouts of the three boatmen who were accompanying him on his expedition and to find out what really happened in the fighting," since the authorities of San Carlos and those of El Castillo assured them there was no danger in their making the trip and they guaranteed their safety. However, they found themselves involved in very violent fighting in which heavy weapons were used.

According to the story by Schutz, there were two battles. One, the most violent took place about 200 meters from where they were hiding, which lasted some 5 hours, and a lesser one "around them." Once, when they moved the water hyacinths to see what was going on they were fired on directly.

The Fighting as Related by the Germans

Last Monday we arrived from San Carlos, say Mr Walter Schutz, on Monday we went to El Castillo. The following day we travelled in a boat with an outboard motor in the company of three Nicaraguan civilians. No one was armed. In San Carlos, as well as in El Castillo, the authorities assured us there was no danger and that they guaranteed our safety.

Five minutes into our journey, we were attacked by an ARDE group which was on a hill in Nicaraguan territory. All their fire was clearly aimed at the boat in which we were travelling. The attack was with grenade launchers and rifles. There we were wounded and the boat damaged. The Nicaraguans who were with us--two of them since we never saw the third one again--took us to the north bank of the river, where we hid among the rushes and hyacinths.

A few minutes later there was a halt in the firing and we then left the boat and walked inland some 60 meters, very slowly because we had two wounded persons. At that moment two battles began, one some 200 meters to the east of where we were, which lasted some 5 hours, and another near us.

When the fighting ended, we did not know where we were. We then waited a half hour to see if the Nicaraguan forces would find us. We then heard a patrol looking for us, we heard them speak and we then learned they were ARDE guerrillas. They found us quickly and pointed their rifles at us. We then identified ourselves as German newsmen.

The guerrillas assured us that if this were so we should not fear anything because they respected human rights and respected the work of newsmen.

Schutz asked that they be given medical attention and that they be taken to a hospital as quickly as possible because Miss Lotz was wounded in one eye and Mr Schwab was bleeding heavily from a wound in the left shoulder. The patrol chief said he would take them where the regional chief was so that he could attend to them and see what he could do.

The two men walked about an hour and the woman was taken on the river (downstream) in the boat they had used and which was half destroyed, but without using the motor. They rested and by radio they asked for another boat, which arrived shortly to take them to the regional commander and to a place where they could be given medical attention.

I Hope You Will Tell all the Truth

Mr Schutz, the German citizen, at this point of his story made the following "warning" to us newsmen present: "This is part of the truth, I hope you will also tell the other part of the truth because it did not all happen in Nicaraguan soil."

The boat requested arrived with more guerrillas, all very courteous. They put them on the boat and took them to Costa Rican soil, which Schutz says he knows very well because he has been in the region several times. The passage is made near El Diamante Island and, moreover, they passed near the German ferry which was run aground and destroyed 3 weeks ago by the Pastora forces.

Upon arrival in Costa Rica, they found a peasant's house where there were several guerrillas and some radio sets. The commander, who treated them very well, was there. After a while they took the two seriously wounded persons on stretchers and they walked about 15 minutes to where there was a jeep in which they rode along a very bad road in the mountains for half an hour. After another hour of walking, they reached a guerrilla camp where there were two buildings and several plastic tents. There were some 40 guerrillas there. One of the buildings was a hospital. There was a nurse and a doctor who took care of them very well immediately. They were given serums, vaccines and bandaged.

Pastora called on the radio and asked for them and talked with Schutz twice. Pastora told him that it was irresponsible of the border guards to send them to a combat zone and that he was very sorry about what had happened. Pastora was asked to inform the German embassy about what had happened and he asked for help so that they could be taken to a hospital quickly.

Schutz had a long talk with the commander and the guerrillas. Around 2100, Pastora said everything was ready and they returned to the crossing where they had arrived previously in the jeep, the two wounded in stretchers and he on foot. They were awaited there by two jeeps with civilians without weapons.

They travelled around 4 hours along very poor roads until shortly before reaching a main street they found a pickup with a German embassy official, a driver and a trusted doctor. Two hours later they were in San Jose in the Biblica Clinic.

To our questions as to why being a very well known newsman in Nicaragua, in International Medicine, it was said from Managua officially that he was a doctor and not a newsman, he acknowledged that he has lived in Nicaragua for a little more than a year; that he had also been in Nicaragua before and that he had made a "health study" of the zone during recent months and that at that time he had travelled on the San Juna River to San Juan del Norte. It is not explained why the Nicaraguan authorities say he is a doctor.

Asked why the Nicaraguan authorities say that Miss Lotz is a teacher, he said that actually Miss Lotz had taken some course in sociology and teaching and that possibly because they saw her degrees and diplomas they had made a mistake.

Mr Schutz acknowledged that he was dressed in green but that this means nothing because green is not a monopoly of the military (he was wearing green trousers yesterday). The two German men will return to Nicaragua within a very few days. Miss Lotz left yesterday morning for Germany, where a specialized clinic will try to save the injured eye.

Lack of Medical Equipment

One of the most serious problems the men of ARDE, who fight in southern Nicaragua, is the lack of medical equipment, it was reported to this newspaper by the medical professional responsible for medical-military activities of the group.

"The problem is so serious that at times we have to use a razor blade cut in half and held by a pair of pliers to do a surgical operation," he told one of our reporters in the zone of conflict.

The situation forces the organization to request the help of citizens of other countries, as is the case of Costa Rica, where soon committees duly identified will request help in medicines and surgical equipment.

There are already Costa Ricans who are offering help of this type. This has been confirmed by the telephone calls to his newspaper on the subject, asking whether we know how to make contact with them.

Those who are fighting against the Nicaraguan Marxist-Leninist regime need medicines, bandages, stretchers, surgical instruments, serums and blood.

They now receive a little international help in this field but it is not enough because of the dimensions the struggle is acquiring.

The newspapers will at the proper time advise how the committees will function and will tell how the help will be received, said the medical-military official of the rebel group.

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SPANISH PRIEST ALLEGEDLY WORKING WITH ARDE

Government Presents Evidence

Managua BARRICADA in Spanish 22 May 83 pp 1,5

[Text] Last Wednesday the Episcopal Conference meeting in Rome issued a statement of protest against the expulsion from our country of Spanish Priest Timoteo Merino Martin, who in the San Juan River Department was directly involved in counter-revolutionary activities.

Despite the proof already published in BARRICADA, the bishops argued that Merino maintained "a strictly ecclesiastical" line and they tried to present his expulsion as an attack on religious freedom.

It is truly unfortunate that, probably because of the "dis-information" the archbishop of Managua says he suffers, the Episcopal Conference supports a counterrevolutionary of whose activities we publish new undeniable proof today.

ANN Special for BARRICADA

San Carlos, San Juan River (Gabriela Selser, Special Correspondent)--Spanish Priest Timoteo Merino Martin maintained close and direct ties with the armed bands which attack the southern zone of Nicaragua from Costa Rica, supporting these groups in the work of ideological diversion against the Sandinist Revolution.

This was asserted by First Lt Ricardo Tiffer, Ministry of Interior representative in the Third Special Zone, who provided a detailed report on the activities the priest performed in peasant communities so that through religion he could pit the people against the Nicaraguan popular process.

Merino, who arrived in Nicaragua in 1978 as a "Spanish missionary," began his religious work at the side of the lay preachers in the San Juan River Department, denouncing the atrocities of the Somozist dictatorship against the population, incidents which, however, he did not openly oppose, arguing an alleged "Christian neutrality," said Tiffer.

He said that while at the first the work by Merino was restricted to the religious organization of the communities, he then turned to a work of open opposition to the Sandinist process, which became visible in May and June of 1982 after the beginning of the campaign initiated against Nicaragua by the counterrevolutionary Eden Pastora Gomez.

At that time, when the mass organizations of the zone strengthened the support for the National Directorate of the Sandinist Front through the collection of signatures of the residents of the south against the traitor Pastora Gomez, Timoeteo Merino pressured the peasants not to support the revolutionary government, saying that Pastora defended the human rights of the people, said Ricardo Tiffer.

He said that as a result of this, in the Melchorita 2 region, 20 kilometers north of San Carlos, no one signed the letter.

The Ministry of Interior representative pointed out that the radius of action where the Spanish priest worked corresponds completely with the zone of military operations established by the traitor Pastora Gomez for the infiltration of his counterrevolutionary groups into Nicaraguan territory.

They Became Contras

Merino began to have direct influence through a work, allegedly Christian, on the various communities of the southern zone, operating specifically in the zone of La Azucena, together with the counterrevolutionary ringleader Reynaldo Osejo Montoya, who acted as his main follower. Osejo, who today is in Costa Rica, is one of the chiefs of the so-called Revolutionary Democratic Alliance (ARDE).

Among other lay preachers of the Gospel, who operated together with Merino in counterrevolutionary work, were Napoleon Garcia Lopez, now under arrest; Romulo Palacios Miranda, Adan Esquivel Polanco and Genaro Lacayo, all the latter now in armed camps in Costa Rican territory, said First Lieutenant Tiffer.

The Sandinist military chief asserted that "all the persons who were linked to the Priest Merino are today in Costa Rica as leaders of bands which enter Nicaragua across the San Juan River or in the military bases which the counterrevolution has in that country."

He added that at the beginning of 1983 Merino began to work directly with ARDE, converting the social structures he had managed to create in the rural areas into centers for recruiting peasants for the counterrevolution. In January of this year, the first leaders of counterrevolutionary detachments, erstwhile lay preachers of the Gospel trained by Merino, began to come to light. Among them are ringleaders Luis Angel Lopez Rugama and Martin Lopez Gonzalez, now in Costa Rican territory.

Attacks on the CEP, UNAG and MPS

Depositions by Nicaraguan peasants Balbino Lopez Perez and Concepcion Lopez Perez, the latter killed days ago in a counterrevolutionary ambush, indicate that Merino exercised a constant pressure on the resident of Azucena, Boca de Sabalo and Buenavista to prevent widespread membership in the Popular Education Center (CEP), the UNAG [expansion unknown] and the Sandinist People's Militias [MPS].

Balbino Lopez Perez announced that the Spanish priest carried out a permanent campaign against the revolution. "I told him one day that revolution and religion were the same thing because Christ had been a revolutionary in his time." That annoyed Merino and for that reason I was expelled from the church," says Lopez Perez.

In turn, Tiffer said that last 27 and 30 January Merino gathered the residents of Boca de Sabalo located on the banks of the San Juan River, and of Buena Vista, also on the border with Costa Rica, and told them that the education of adults was a "political nursery" which should be eliminated. As a result of that, said Tiffer, two of the three existing CEP's in the zone were dissolved, with only a study center of nine members left.

Ricardo Tiffer added that on last 6 March, Timoteo Merino also visited the home of the counterrevolutionary Osejo. After the meeting Osejo told the residents of La Azucena that Merino was their leader and that as of that moment was going to be the leader of counterrevolutionary activity in the region.

Blackmail, Bribery and Thefts

Other citizens of the San Juan River declared that Merino gave money to the peasants, spending 200,000 cordobas in each zone so that they would not join the Sandinist agricultural cooperatives. After the sum was given to them, they were asked to pay it back with interest, arguing that the money belonged to the religious institution he represented. In that respect, Lieutenant Tiffer said, the Spanish Priest did a business with a loan granted by the CONFER [Nicaraguan Confederation of Catholic Schools] for the peasant communities of the zone. He gave money in minimum amounts only to those residents who supported him. Similarly, a power saw provided by the CARITAS organization could only be used by the persons Merino selected.

In the last months, Merino bought a boat he rented to the residents, who needed to move from one side of the river to the other, even charging a higher than the established rate. He also sold short wave radios to the Nicaraguan peasants for 400 cordobas, radios capable of receiving two bands of Costa Rican transmissions.

Through the lay preachers, he urged the residents to tune in the counterrevolutionary station directed in Costa Rica by traitor Pastora Gomez.

"All the activity of the priest in that zone," explained Ricardo Tiffer, "caused serious harm in the poor communities of Nicaragua." He said that last March an entire family living in La Azucena fled to Costa Rica due to the campaign of confusion and terror launched by counterrevolutionaries through religious practices.

It is the "Word of God" to attack the Revolution

With the lay preachers acting as his mouthpieces, Merino told the peasants that it was the "word of God" to rebel and take up arms against the Sandinist Revolution, said Tiffer.

He added that there were even cases in which ringleader Reynaldo Osejo promised the peasant families he would give them U.S. Government identification cards so that when the counterrevolutionaries arrived at the place they would not kill them.

In the region known as La Bodega northeast of San Carlos, the lay preachers, by exerting great pressure, caused a large party of the community to join the counter-revolution, supported by a group of some 50 persons who penetrated from Costa Rica and began to operate in the area surrounding the zone, said Tiffer. He added that when the Sandinist troops began their defensive operations in the area, the peasants began to desert from the counterrevolutionary ranks, among them 21 residents of La Bodega, who recently surrendered to the authorities of the Third Military Zone.

Asked about the consequences of the activities carried out by Timoteo Merino in Nicaragua, First Lt Ricardo Tiffer said the Spanish priest is undoubtedly directly responsible for all the diversionary work in the San Juan River area. He indicated that the Episcoal Conference of Nicaragua makes "a grave error by giving its vote of confidence to that priest despite the overwhelming proof of his activities against our people."

Tiffer declared that it is probable that Merina will soon appear directly linked to ARDE and the Somozist groups who are in Costa Rica. "This," he said, "shall be the most direct proof of his ties to the plans for aggression against Nicaragua."

Peasants Accuse Priest

Managua BARRICADA in Spanish 25 May 83 pp 1,5

[Article by special correspondent Gabriela Selser: "The Beasts of Pastora Use Contra Priests for Recruiting Peasants"]

[Text] San Carlos, Nicaragua, May (ANN)--Counterrevolutionary Eden Pastora has used lay preachers and rural priests for recruiting Nicaraguan peasants and taking them to military bases in Costa Rican territory, it was revealed by several persons arrested by authorities in this zone.

Pedro Pablo Rodriguez Andino, native of the Los Chiles district northwest of this city, more than 300 kilometers to the south of Managua, said he had been "won over by a lay preacher," who he identified as Marcelino Andino, who "Promised me he would obtain work for me in Costa Rica but then took me to the camp of Eden Pastora in that country."

He added that the camp is located on the banks of the San Juan River, the natural border between the two countries. There were between 50 and 60 armed men there, among them "some 15 Costa Ricans all wearing military clothing." The criminal said that Pastora frequented the base where he had stored a large number of Chinese-made AK rifles, as well as carbines.

"Everyone who arrived was given weapons by Eden Pastora to be brought to Nicaragua. They also gave me 1,500 cordobas so that I would fight against the Sandinists," said Rodriguez Andino.

He said that the lay preachers, the majority of whom were already in Costa Rica operating as counterrevolutionaries in the camps "told us that the Sandinists had to be killed because they wanted to bring communism to Nicaragua."

For his part, Santos Martinez Garcia, a 40-year-old peasant, who lived in the Nicaraguan town of La Venada north of San Carlos, declared that in all the zone, which is some 10 kilometers from the border, peasants were pressured into going to Costa Rica through religious work performed by several priests, among them the Spanish priest Timoteo Merino, who recently was expelled from the country for counterrevolutionary activities.

"Merino held meetings with lay preachers Napoleon Garcia Lopez, Luis Martinez Garcia and Reynaldo Osejo Montoya. They instructed us to rise up in arms, telling us that the Sandinist Front was going to take away our lands and everything we had in Nicaragua," he said.

The peasant, who operated for 8 months with the counterrevolutionaries, asserted that the lay preachers completely controlled the Nicaraguan communities of Pavon I, Pavon II, Mata de Cana, Los Chiles and La Bodega. All those territories have been scenes of armed raids by counterrevolutionaries in recent weeks.

"I decided to join the counterrevolution because they told us it was the word of God to do so and that if we did not, they were going to kill us. That is how I arrived at that counterrevolutionary camp where there were many weapons and 18 men led by chiefs Benigno Gonzalez and Santos Espinoza, said Martinez.

He said that "all the lay preachers are now rebels, some inside Nicaragua and others in Costa Rica, led by Eden Pastora."

Another prisoner, peasant Antonio Sanchez Betanco, 19, said that 6 months ago he was taken by the priest Roger Diaz, who worked with Spanish priest Timoteo Merino, to a camp in Costa Rica located in front of the Nicaraguan town of El Castillo on the banks of the San Juan River.

"There," he said, "the lay preachers met with the contras and with some 20 Costa Rican soldiers who were supporting them. They told us they were going to give us weapons also so that we could fight in Nicaragua."

The Nicaraguan peasant said that before being taken to Nicaragua he took part in several meetings in the town of Las Minas in the southern zone of Nicaragua, meetings organized by the priest Merino. He added that those meetings were held every week and were attended by some 40 persons who came from various districts of the region.

"The lay preachers told us that what we were going to do was an evangelizing work among the people. They asked us for money to help the counterrevolutionaries because they said they were going to bring freedom to Nicaragua," he added.

Sanchez Betanco said he felt "sorry" having collaborated with the terrorists. "We have been deceived," he said.

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SOUTHERN FRONT

CHAMORRO'S FARN RETURNS TO SOUTHERN FRONT

San Jose LA REPUBLICA in Spanish 13 Jun 83 p 4

[Article by Carlos Vargas Gene: "FARN Commandos in South Nicaragua Once More"]

[Excerpt] South Front of Nicaragua--"We have literally been fighting mud for 3 days. The rain at times is so heavy and comes accompanied by such fierce winds and such terrifying electrical storms that the paths are lost, the old plain's crossings become lakes and the trees of the jungle sway, splitting and creaking. There were times when we could not see 2 meters ahead, as we looked for the 'contact' with whom we would once more enter the southern part of Nicaragua, where more than 500 human lives have been lost between April and May as the anti-Sandinist guerrillas initiated their operations against the scattered posts of the Sandinist People's Army (EPS).

"It was a surprise to find that the FARN [National Resistance Armed Forces] of Commander Fernando (El Negro) Chamorro had reappeared on the scene in south Nicaragua and that its leader has been with a special column for several days performing the work of fortification, excavation, tunnels and "breathing zones" in the devilish swampy zone of the Poponjochal River to the south of the lake port of San Carlos of Nicaragua, and in the northern part of Punta Zahina and Cairo on the southern edge of the Great Lake of Nicaragua.

One Pact and Two "Wedges"

Looking like mud balls, we arrived at a series of hills covered with thick woods some 7 kilometers from the border inside Nicaraguan territory, at a place the FARN guerrillas call "El Diluvio," accompanied by LA REPUBLICA photographer Cordero, Channel 7 reporter Mario Zaragoza and cameraman Marvin Cepedes, who had joined us in that almost aquatic journey in search of the anti-Sandinist guerrillas who are fighting on the southern front. This time complications were greater because we first had to find the boundary stones, indicators of the astronomic border lines, which at this new clandestine entry point for entering Nicaragua no longer has the safety of the San Juan River and forces one to engage in a labyrinthian work of discovering hidden paths among the vegetation.

As "El Diluvio" we confirmed the presence of the FARN commandos and we met on a knoll, where several 80mm mortars and a 50-caliber machinegun are emplaced, with the ranking commander of this military group, Commander Fernando "El Negro" Chamorro.

Sheltered by jungle hammocks and some makeshift plastic tents, which the FARN always carries in its packs to "protect ourselves against the pesky nights," Chamorro told us "my presence in southern Nicaragua is no mystery."

He added: "Many people said we had abandoned operations here but actually there were some movements to insure the presence of the FARN in the south and north of my country, and to achieve some sort of primary pact with the FDN [Nicaraguan Democratic Force] and the MISURATAS [Miskito, Sumu and Rama Unity] so as to intensify military actions at both ends and support each other."

Planning Meeting

Chamorro, together with his son Fernando (recently expelled from Costa Rica) and a half dozen commanders, yesterday made a review of the "program of operations" that will reactivate the presence of the FARN in the south and will be an FARN "wedge" in the north between the MISURATA and the FDN.

"We have advanced much in political and military coordination," said Chamorro, because only with unity can we justify the struggle against the Marxist power that has taken over this country, granting enormous amounts of power to foreign forces that are linked to the world ideological struggle and for hegemonic control of the Central American isthmus.

Chamorro said that "without any doubt the ARDE guerrilla movement and the actions undertaken by Commander Eden Pastora are of the greatest importance and meaning for achieving the liberation of Nicaragua.

"I only regret that unthinking personal leadership ambitions (caudillismo) are interjected in the talks and efforts we are carrying out to achieve the unity of all the forces fighting communism in this country."

He expounded his conviction and assurance of "final victory" in "this irreversible struggle" and that "it is going to cost us so much blood."

Commander Chamorro revealed that on the northern front, the proposal of the struggle in three "arrows" of penetration has been reached: 1) the FDN in the northcentral part of Nicaragua, 2) the FARN in the northeast, and 3) the MISURATA on the strip of Caribbean coast.

"Events will speak for us also in the southern territory of the country, which we have begun to control, said Chamorro and forecast: "Within 19 days we shall see some of those things in both directions."

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FARN, FDN, MISURATA AGREE TO COOPERATE

San Jose LA REPUBLICA in Spanish 14 Jun 83 p 6

[Article by Carlos Vargas Gene: "FARN, FDN and MISURATA Pact and Announcement of Shared Power"]

[Text] Southern Nicaragua--Before leaving the mountain zone of south Nicaragua, where we interviewed Commander Fernando Chamorro Rapaccioli (El Negro), the guerrilla leader of the Nicaraguan Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARN) [as published], confirmed that "the FARN already has a clear and defined concept of what the future government of my country will be when we win victory."

He added: "We shall form a participatory junta of government in which all of us groups who are fighting to liberate the country and have acted in unity will be represented, accepting as of now the commitment to consolidate ourselves into a formal amalgam to speed up the process for the defeat of the Sandinist Junta. We are in agreement with the majority of the groups in the struggle in that such a collegiate, democratic, pluralistic government, free from foreign meddling, will lead Nicaragua along proper paths and will call for free elections within 1 year of assuming power."

As of now the FARN-UDN, FDN and MISURATA groups have entered into a pact of political and military mutual help which has no need of documents, formulisms or pantomimed signatures. We base ourselves on the fact that we either trust each other, acting in unity, or we all distrust each other and we dissolve."

It is a matter of a pact which will reactivate us intensely in coming days, with the arrival of people duly trained in guerrilla warfare, more weapons and logistic support, which will allow us to maintain the three pincers we have planned in the north and share a part of the Southern Front with the ARDE forces commanded by Eden Pastora, although they still remain aloof from our common effort and desire for unity."

Chamorro and several of his commanders such as "Carlos," "Adan," "Fernando," and "Israel" admitted being engaged in carrying out an intensive work of "preparing the ground" for the blows they will strike in the south of Nicaragua. "We have to work like lions so that things will be just right," said Adan.

"Our fighting morale is high, our political convictions firm and our weapons are versatile," added "Carlos."

Other aspects of our few days of life with these guerrillas will be revealed upon our return to San Jose.

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July 22, 1983